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THE MAN ON THE END OF THE BOOM WAS SHUBRICK! "FIGHTING JACK, BY ALL THAT'S GOOD!"

Fighting Jack Shubrick;

OR,

The Dupe's Death-Trap.

BY T. J. FLANAGAN,

AUTHOR OF "MIDSHIPMAN DARE," "THE TWO MIDSHIPMEN," "THE THREE LIEUTENANTS," "THE FOUR COMMANDERS," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

ON BOARD OLD IRONSIDES.

A SULTRY afternoon in July, 1812, on board the frigate Constitution, lying at Annapolis.

War with England has been declared less than a month, and the all-absorbing question in fore-castle as well as cabin is:

"How soon will we sail?"

Between two and three bells, in the first dog-watch (5 to 5:30 P. M.), the officers, grouped under the canvas stretched over the quarter-deck, feel as happy and comfortable as the weather, and the unceasing taint of their sailing, will permit, and the crew look upon them as favored mortals.

At three bells, Captain Hull comes on board, and reverses this feeling by inviting the officers to dine with him. The officers now feel miserable, and envy the crew, and the second lieutenant (Wadsworth), who is officer of the watch.

"Think of it! A solid hour, at the very shortest, in that hot cabin—and preserve a dignified appearance all the time!" groans Hoffman the fourth lieutenant, as the captain and first lieutenant go below.

Referring to the latter, a young acting-lieutenant, Morgan (afterward commodore), remarks, consolingly:

"Well, poor Morris is even worse off than we are. His 'torture' begins now, and will continue after ours is over."

"Very true, but that doesn't help us any, eh, Spence?"

The officer appealed to, is the same cool, handsome, and elegant Gentleman George, who served with Decatur and Lawrence, and won his lieutenantcy in the war with Tripoli.

If he feels warm, George does not look it, and if he looks upon the captain's invitation as an affliction, does not admit it, for, looking up, he says, lazily:

"You should feel complimented, instead of growling. If ever you get to heaven, you'll find something there to growl at."

"And when you get into his Satanic Majesty's regions, you will not look so cool and comfortable!" retorts Hoffman.

"All right," returns the Gentleman, as he sinks back in his chair. "All right, but, how your beautiful disposition will keep you squirming."

Spence's tone and manner caused a general laugh, and they prepared for the ordeal in better humor for it.

"Where is Mr. Shubrick?" asked the captain, when they were seated at the table.

"He has not reported, sir," answered Morris, adding:

"Is he, then, to join us?"

"Yes. Like our friend, Mr. Spence, he is anxious to be in active service," smilingly replied the captain.

"But, unlike me, has managed to obtain an appointment, I presume," added Spence.

"Your presumption is correct; but, what of that? You are as likely to distinguish yourself as a volunteer as he, or any of us, as an officer appointed to the ship," consoled Captain Hull.

"Well, we all are sure of having an early opportunity of doing that, since Shubrick is to join us," rejoined Spence.

"Let us hope so," returned the captain, and, addressing Morris, made some inquiry regarding the condition of the ship, which changed the current of conversation.

Spence's words were not overlooked, however, and then the captain dismissed his guests with:

"I will not detain you, gentlemen, as we sail to-morrow, and you will probably want all the time you can get to yourselves."

Morgan remarked—on returning to the quarter-deck:

"Mr. Spence has turned prophet."

"Looks like it," assented Hoffman, and, to Spence:

"What oracle—what priestess of Mars do you consult, George?"

"Talk sense—if you can—and, perhaps, I may answer you," was the somewhat testy reply.

"Egad! he's riled over the 'priestess,'" com-

mented Hoffman, and, for the next few minutes, confined his conversation to Morgan.

Shortly after the second officer approached, and Spence called:

"Hello, Wadsworth! Did you hear that the 'Man of Destiny' has been appointed to Old Ironsides?"

"What! Shubrick to join us?"

"So the old man says. And we're to sail to-morrow—thank the Lord!"

"Amen to that! And, if Shubrick's to be with us, we can rest easy on the score of having plenty to do."

"Why—what has he to do with it?" inquired Hoffman.

"Well, I don't know what he has to do with it," rejoined Wadsworth, "but, as George calls him, Jack Shubrick is the 'Man of Destiny'—as far as fighting goes. No ship that carries him fails to have plenty of it."

"And, for fear either of you gentlemen should need to be assured on that point," added Spence, "I'll give either of you two to one, in any amount, that, if Shubrick joins us, we are engaged within ten days."

"I'll take that—just for luck, and will be a cheerful loser to the tune of a hundred, if this 'Man of Destiny' brings us into a fight."

Morgan spoke laughingly, and the Gentleman cautioned:

"I don't want your money, but, if you are in earnest, I'll book the bet?"

"Book away! I'd give another hundred to be certain that your assertion will prove true!" exclaimed the acting lieutenant, and, as the volunteer hesitated, added:

"Go ahead, Mr. Spence! You made the offer, and I've accepted it. Book your bet!"

CHAPTER II.

THE MAN OF DESTINY.

WHILE his comrades to be were making bets as to the influence his presence would have in bringing "Old Ironsides" (as the sailors, with affectionate pride, had christened the Constitution), into speedy engagement with the enemy, Jack Shubrick was keeping up his character of being on hand whenever there was a chance of fighting.

The appointment to the Constitution had been secured at the last moment, and the young lieutenant was well aware that every nerve was being strained to get the famous—and soon to be still more famous—frigate to sea.

He wished to visit his mother and other relatives in Charleston before sailing, but travel was not fixed by time-table in those days. If not delayed on the road, the lieutenant had barely time to visit his relatives and join his ship—of the date of sailing of which he had received a hint from Captain Hull while in Washington.

Shubrick (as he was also well aware), had been very fortunate in being appointed to the Constitution. Officers of skill and experience were plentiful, but vessels of every kind were exceedingly scarce.

At first he was inclined to write, instead of going in person, but during his last cruise, Shubrick's father had died, and his three brothers were away in different vessels.

"I'll see mother before I go," he decided, after some deliberation, little dreaming how important that decision would prove to himself as well as others, in the near future.

It was then a long journey, but was accomplished safely, and within the time the young lieutenant had fixed upon before starting.

"I have just twenty hours to spend with you, mother," he announced, on the morning of his arrival.

"That being the case, Colonel Drayton must be notified at once," returned Mrs. Shubrick, and, having dispatched a servant with a message to the colonel, added:

"Uncle Drayton has visitors, I understand, but I have written him that you return to-morrow, so of course he will come."

"He will be delighted to see you! How big and strong you have grown since leaving his office, my boy!"

And the fond mother, tearful, yet smiling, gazed proudly on her "boy."

Mothers are seldom chary of praise, where a favorite son is the object, yet Mrs. Shubrick might have said much more, and still not have overrated the appearance of her son.

Few men were Jack Shubrick's equals in martial bearing, and this, with his extremely fine personal appearance, commanded attention everywhere.

Standing five feet eleven inches in height,

splendidly proportioned, and with a frame that indicated activity as well as strength, he was also a man who compelled respect.

As Mrs. Shubrick predicted, Colonel Drayton came at once, and really was glad to see his young relative and former pupil.

"Well, Jack—or should I say lieutenant?" began the smiling colonel, who was then a noted lawyer, "the sea appears to agree with you better than the law. Each time I see you, you seem to have added an inch to your height, and two to your chest."

"Which goes to show my wisdom in abandoning Blackstone for the briny deep," laughed Jack, adding:

"And my wisdom—I think—should be all the more applauded, because it was against the advice and wishes of all my relatives and friends (including yourself) that I did so."

"The corn is admitted, my boy," quietly returned the colonel, and then, warmly:

"You were right, and you certainly have got on famously, Jack!"

"So have all the boys whom I 'led astray'."

The young lieutenant's bluish-gray eyes twinkled mischievously as he said this, for he was quoting an expression of Colonel Drayton's regarding his three brothers, who, following Jack's example, had entered the navy.

(Each of the three afterward rose to a higher rank than the speaker—one, William, becoming a commodore.)

"Yes, yes," hastily assented the colonel, to whom the subject was distasteful, adding:

"By the way, the gentleman whose case was the cause—or the last straw, if you like—of your disgust of the law, is now visiting me."

"Indeed? Well, notwithstanding you were on his side, I think himself and his case are frauds."

"Please confine yourself to thinking so, Jack," laughed the colonel, "for you—and, of course, your mother—must spend the evening with me. Several of your old friends will be present, and will be delighted to have an opportunity of meeting their famous fellow-townsmen."

That evening Jack was introduced to Mr. Lee (the gentleman referred to by Colonel Drayton as visiting him), a sour-looking, obstinate Englishman of fifty-five or sixty.

Having no desire to cultivate Mr. Lee's acquaintance, the lieutenant took advantage of the first opportunity to leave that gentleman to his own resources for information regarding those present—notwithstanding the colonel's assurance:

"Mr. Shubrick knows everybody here, Mr. Lee, and will inform you as to who and what they are."

This was very impolite of Jack, and he afterward regretted it—but not because it was impolite.

Early next morning the young lieutenant—he was barely twenty-four, and would be a miracle in these days—started for Annapolis to join the Constitution, and arrived on the outskirts of that town in the evening of the 11th of July—about the time Spence was backing his assertion that Jack Shubrick's magic presence was sufficient to insure a speedy engagement.

As Shubrick drew near the town, he saw three men attacking a fourth, who, from a kind of an undress uniform, appeared to be a naval officer, and jumping from his horse, went to the assistance of the latter.

The assailants were armed with knives, while the man in uniform defended himself with a stick—evidently a branch of a tree, which he had picked up on being attacked.

Jack had a pair of pistols, and when, after dismounting, he saw the officer fall, he fired at the robbers—as he supposed them—just as they rushed toward their prey.

So engaged were the robbers and their victim, that the pistol-shot was their first notice of the lieutenant's presence, and the sight of his all, athletic form, bearing down on them at full speed, filled the villains with alarm, but one, who appeared to be the leader, quickly recovered himself, and, pulling a pistol from his pocket, ordered the others to attack Jack.

"I'll finish this one!" he exclaimed, with a sounding oath. "You finish t'other!"

Seeing their leader about to use a pistol—which, as it afterward transpired, was in direct violation of their instructions—the two appointed to "finish" Jack, immediately followed his example, producing each a pair.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN WITHOUT A NAME.

AT the moment the now willing-to-be-murderers produced pistols, the lieutenant was

within one hundred feet of them, and both fired.

At the same moment, the man on the ground hurled his stick at the leader of the murderous scoundrels, who had approached quite close to fire the "finishing" shot.

The stick was well aimed, striking the leader full in the face, causing him to stagger, and, involuntarily, to discharge his weapon.

The pistols of the robbers, on the other hand, were badly aimed—or rather, they were aimed at a man who, while all around him were falling, appeared to bear a charmed life. At all events, they missed their mark, and before they fired a second time, Jack was within ten yards, but again he escaped injury.

Hurling their empty pistols at the undaunted, and apparently invulnerable, lieutenant, the assassins attempted to use their knives, but it was too late, and, as one was struck down, the other turned and fled.

Jack did not attempt to pursue the fleeing robber, nor did he give a second thought to the one he had knocked down. His interest was centered in the struggle going on between the leader of the murderous ruffians, and the naval officer.

Over and over rolled the struggling pair, first one, and then the other, on top; but the officer was gradually getting the best of it, and cautioned Jack not to interfere.

"Keep off!" he cried; "I've got this scoundrel half choked."

Although much the smaller man of the two, the truth of the officer's words was proved a few minutes later, when he sprang up, exclaiming:

"There! He's whole choked, now!"

"I have to thank you for my life," he continued, extending his hand, "and you—"

"For your purse, possibly, but not your life," interrupted Jack, grasping the proffered hand.

"I should like to believe you are correct," returned the other, in a thoughtful, puzzled tone, "but if that fellow would speak the truth, you would probably find that stealing my purse was only incidental to taking my life."

Jack stared, and the speaker explained:

"This is the third attempt, and in no case has any demand for money been made."

While they were talking, the robber, or assassin, who had been knocked almost senseless by Jack, had stolen across the field in which the attack was made, and was getting over the fence when detected.

"Hello! There's one of your friends trying to get away."

The lieutenant was about to start after the fellow, but was restrained by his companion, who said:

"Never mind him! Indeed, there is no use of our waiting here any longer. If they are set on by—"

The speaker suddenly stopped, and, with an angry exclamation, started toward the low rail fence, at a gait that caused Jack to comment:

"That fellow would stand a deuce of a lot of killing—to run like that, after the tussle he's just gone through."

The cause of the stranger's sudden interruption of himself was his discovery that the escaping robber was endeavoring to expedite matters by borrowing Jack's horse, and, even as he spoke, the lieutenant hastened to assist in preventing this.

There was no necessity, however, for on seeing he was discovered, the would-be horse-thief abandoned the attempt to mount—in which he had been delayed, through the restiveness of the spirited animal.

It was now Jack's turn to restrain pursuit, which he did, saying:

"Oh, let him go! Lucky you saw him, though, Mr.—"

"Oxnard," supplied the other, after a momentary hesitation, adding:

"That is what I have, until recently, supposed was my name (although better known by another), but, just now, I am uncertain what my name is—if I have one."

"Queer, isn't it?" continued Oxnard, as he noted the effect of his strange statement.

"It is somewhat unusual," assented Jack; "but, Mr. Oxnard—"

"Call me Harry, if you please—that, I feel as if I had some right to."

"All right, Harry!"

"My name is Shubrick—Jack Shubrick, and I was about to remark that, as it is growing dark, we had better look up the gentleman you throttled."

"Oh, he's gone by this time," carelessly re-

joined Oxnard (or Harry, as he preferred to be called.)

And on returning to the field, this was found to be the case.

"Let him go," said Harry, in the same careless way, and then, in sudden wrath, added:

"But he had better beware! Next time I'll not let go till he's dead!"

"Well, there's no use hunting for him, I suppose," remarked Jack; "so we may as well get under way for the town."

"You are a sailor, I take it?"

"Like yourself, I think," laughed the young lieutenant.

"Scarcely. If I'm not mistaken, you are a naval officer, while I am merely commander of a privateer," was the grave reply.

Shubrick looked in astonishment at his companion; he was a bold-looking, elegantly-formed young man of twenty-two or twenty-three, whose every movement betrayed his wonderful agility as well as strength.

Until the War of 1812, privateering was looked upon as something akin to piracy, and, misinterpreting Jack's silence, the youthful commander explained:

"Where there are so many brave, experienced officers idle for want of vessels, I could not hope to be appointed to a ship—as an officer, and did not care to serve as a seaman, having just resigned my commission as a lieutenant in the service of his Majesty, George IV."

"A Britisher!" muttered Jack, under his breath.

"No," returned Harry, as if divining his companion's thoughts; "no; whatever doubts I may have about my name, I have none about my birthplace. My feelings are American, and I am an American!"

The last words were uttered proudly and defiantly, as if some one had contradicted or doubted the assertion, which caused Jack to remark:

"I haven't disputed the fact, my dear fellow."

"Pardon me," said Harry, smiling (as much at his companion's protest, as the cause of it), "pardon me, but I am so accustomed—or rather have been so accustomed—to fighting that point, that I forget myself."

"Well, if you fight your vessel, as you appear to have fought the point, his Majesty will have good cause to believe your assertion," declared Jack, adding:

"Here's a decent-looking inn—let us stop here."

Harry assented, and finding that it would be nearly nine o'clock before they would be through eating, Jack decided to remain there for the night, as did the former, being tired out walking.

"I can just as well go aboard in the morning," thought the lieutenant, but he was mistaken, for, being very tired, he slept late, and on reaching the river, learned that the Constitution had sailed an hour before.

"Don't worry. I'll fix that," assured Harry.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW SHUBRICK BOARDED THE CONSTITUTION.

DURING the night of the 11th of July, 1812, confusion reigned king on board the Constitution.

So hurried were the preparations for going to sea that over one hundred of the ship's company arrived only that night, and in the excitement attending the quartering of the men, stowing of the last of the stores and munitions, and the prospect of sailing next morning, Lieutenant Shubrick's absence was overlooked.

The work went on steadily throughout the night, and by daylight everything was shipshape—though not Bristol fashion. Then it was discovered that the "Man of Destiny" had not come aboard.

"It's too bad; I'm sorry!" exclaimed the captain, on learning this, and the tone in which he spoke indicated more than the words how much he regretted Shubrick's absence.

He was at breakfast at the time, and addressing Spence, who was his guest, continued:

"I'm afraid you do not sympathize with me—since you, of course, will fill Mr. Shubrick's place, if he does not turn up within the next hour."

"On the contrary," replied the gentleman, "I assure you that no one regrets his absence more than I do, for his presence means fight—and speedily, too."

"Well, you have the courage to say what we all believe, whether we say it or not, Mr. Spence, and I believe you would be glad to see Mr. Shubrick come aboard."

"Indeed I would, sir," was the heartily-uttered assurance of Shubrick's successor.

But the "Man of Destiny" was still absent when, at the expiration of an hour, the captain issued the necessary orders, and Old Ironsides was got under way.

On the second day out, just after daybreak, a sail was discovered about a mile to windward, bearing toward the frigate, and as an English fleet had been reported cruising in that vicinity, it was at first thought that the stranger (which was a beautiful-looking brig) was one of that fleet.

"No, she's an American," declared keen-sighted Spence, adding:

"There isn't a vessel as small as that in the English fleet."

"I'm afraid you are right. See how she comes on," remarked Lieutenant Morris.

"He spoke regretfully—voicing the feeling of every man on board the Constitution.

The whole ship's company was aching for fight—for an opportunity to revenge the wrongs and insults inflicted by England during the six or eight years prior to 1812.

During that period, although at peace with the "Mistress of the Seas," England took and captured from us more than one thousand vessels! And thus, from time to time, they continued to heap insult upon insult, with their men-of-war lying at the mouths of our harbors, and searching and detaining our merchant ships in every part of the world, until patience became cowardice, and war was declared.

It was the memory of these wrongs and insults, that caused the feeling of disappointment, when it became apparent that the brig was an American.

"It looks as if she was in pursuit—wanted to speak to us," observed Spence, noting the spread of canvas on the stranger.

"My idea exactly! If we had Shubrick with us, I'd bet she had information of the English fleet," assented Lieutenant Read, adding:

"What the deuce is the fellow at? He cannot intend to set a studding-sail!"

"He is running out a boom nevertheless—his weather foretopmast-studding-sail boom," returned Spence, and a moment later, exclaimed:

"And, by Jove, they're running a man up to the end of it!"

"Right you are! There he hangs at the end of the boom, like a man condemned by a general court-martial."

Captain Hull, who had just come up on deck, made this remark.

"Speaking would be close work to-day," he continued; "that is why they are going to have that man board us—if possible."

In a short time the stranger was within one hundred yards of the Constitution, on her weather quarter, dashing the brine before her in a way to denote a fearful momentum.

It was dangerous and difficult work, and many were the admiring remarks called forth by the skillful manner in which the brig was brought across the stern of the frigate and luffed up on her lee quarter—the safest point to approach in the heavy sea then running.

By this time the discovery had been made that the man on the end of the boom was Shubrick!

"Jack Shubrick, by all that's good!" exclaimed Spence, as the stranger swept by, and a similar exclamation from the second lieutenant confirmed his words and apprised the excited group on the frigate's poop that the "Man of Destiny" was about to join them.

Both vessels being close-hauled, it would now have been possible, by watching the helms closely, to have brought the two hulls within ten yards of each other.

This was nearer, however, than was necessary, the boom with the man on the end of it projecting twice that distance beyond the bows of the vessel, and, when still some thirty-five feet away, Shubrick made a sign for attention.

"All right! Cast!" cried several, seeing Shubrick swing a coil of rope.

Seeing hands raised to catch it, the man on the boom made a cast, and Spence, grasping the rope, instantly hauled in the slack.

A half-dozen hands assisted in hauling on the rope, and, as the pressure became strong, the people of the brig lowered away.

In this way Shubrick descended obliquely, landing safely and amid loud cheering on the poop of the Constitution.

Bowing to Captain Hull, the Man of Destiny, as if there was nothing unusual about his manner of coming aboard, said:

"I was an hour too late to catch you at Annapolis, but am ready for duty now, sir."

"I have learned something of the English fleet," he continued, after a glance at the officers about him.

"Come below," invited the captain.

And, as Shubrick followed his superior to the cabin, Spence triumphantly demanded:

"Well, Hoffman—Morgan—what about that bet now? You heard what he said about the English fleet?"

CHAPTER V.

THE CHARM BEGINS TO WORK.

IN response to Lieutenant Spence's triumphant banter, both Hoffman and Morgan expressed themselves as willing to renew the bet, that Shubrick's presence would not insure an engagement within ten days from the date of sailing.

"Oh, nonsense! I don't want your money, and will not accept any wager, until we hear what news he had for the captain," expostulated the Gentleman.

If the others doubted the sincerity of this declaration, they exhibited no inclination to express it, although laughing at Spence's "superstition," as they termed it, but Shubrick's return to the deck, within a quarter of an hour, ended any doubt there might have been felt.

"Is it permitted you to let us know what you learned about the English fleet?" asked Spence.

"Oh, yes—it's no secret," replied Shubrick, "they are working up toward New York, and we are going after them."

Even as he spoke, Captain Hull was issuing the necessary orders to make more sail on the frigate, and Spence said:

"You see how the captain looks upon Mr. Shubrick's information, gentlemen—do you still doubt my assertion?"

"Yes, and no; but, just for luck, we'll renew the bet," replied Morgan.

"Very good, there are eight days yet remaining," rejoined the Gentleman.

It required but little more than one-half the time mentioned to prove that, however superstitious he might be, Spence had won his bet.

It was on the 17th, about one P. M., while the Constitution was steering along the coast toward Sandy Hook, with a light breeze from the northward, and under easy sail, that all hands were electrified by a hail from the mast-head, announcing four large sail to the northward.

For the next two hours there was great excitement on board the frigate, and shortly after six bells (three o'clock), it was intensified by the discovery of a fifth sail to the northward and eastward, which looked like a man-of-war.

The last sail being further to eastward, and a little detached from the others, Captain Hull ordered:

"Spread every inch of canvas, Mr. Morris! We must try to cut off that ship."

"Ay, ay, sir!" came the prompt and cheerful response, and the order was fulfilled with an alacrity which showed how eager the men themselves were to get into action.

Until this order was issued, every one was in doubt as to what course Captain Hull would pursue, the majority believing the Constitution would try to escape.

Four frigates and a ship of the line appeared too great odds for even Old Ironsides, but now doubt vanished.

"Well, Morgan, do you feel satisfied yet?" asked Spence, as at four bells (six o'clock) the frigate wore round with her head to the eastward, bringing her to the windward of the enemy.

Before the young lieutenant could answer, the light studding-sails and staysails were ordered set, the drummer to beat to quarters, and the ship to be cleared for action.

This work brought the whole of Captain Hull's unusual force of officers into play, and prevented further conversation among them.

The wind continued very light from the southward; until eight o'clock both vessels were slowly nearing each other.

At ten, the Constitution shortened sail and hoisted the private night signal, but after keeping the lights aloft for an hour, without receiving any answer from the British ship, they were taken in, and Old Ironsides made sail again, hauling aboard her starboard tacks, and standing to eastward under easy sail.

During the whole of the middle watch (12 to 4 A. M.) the wind was light from southward and westward, and just as the morning watch was called, the stranger (which subsequently proved to be the Guerriere) tacked, then wore entirely round, threw a rocket, and fired two

guns—no doubt as a signal to the rest of the fleet that an enemy's frigate was near.

At this time, three of the enemy's ships were found to be on the starboard quarter of the Constitution, and two astern.

Then it was seen that this was Commodore Broke's squadron, all of which had been closing in on the American during the night, and was now just out of long gunshot.

"Two frigates on the lee quarter, and a line-of-battle, two frigates, a brig, and a schooner, astern!" announced Spence, as the mist of the morning cleared away.

All these vessels had English colors flying, and immediately gave chase to the American frigate; but it soon fell quite calm, and then came the tug of war.

All the fleet were in hot pursuit, and the trial commenced of seamanship, skill and nautical activity—every feeling of national pride and ardent patriotism being aroused and brought into play on both sides.

This was to be the grand crisis—whether (at the very commencement of the war) we should lose one of our finest frigates, or whether she should escape, and shed a halo of glory on the flag under which she sailed!

It was now that Captain Hull was to experience the benefit of his unusually well-manned quarter-deck.

Standing close to Shubrick and Spence, he heard the former observe:

"With our boats out, we could draw away before they would notice what we were at."

"Correct!" assented the Gentleman, adding:

"And by the time they did, we could have some of those long twenty-fours run out, as stern-chasers."

Although he afterward gave his officers full credit for their share in the action, Captain Hull was a little provoked that these suggestions should be made in his hearing, at the very moment he had himself resolved upon following a similar course, and somewhat angrily ordered:

"Hoist out all your boats, Mr. Morris!"

"Mr. Read! Run out four of those 24's astern! Cut away that frame!"

And then began the sternest stern-chase ever recorded in history.

CHAPTER VI.

A VERY STERN CHASE.

IN revenge for their suggestions, Spence and Shubrick were the first ordered for boat duty, but soon had plenty of company, all the boats being out and towing the frigate, within a few minutes of each other.

While this was being done, Lieutenant Read had cut away part of the stern frame, and got the guns in position.

By this time the English commanders had discovered what was going on on board the Constitution, and Captain Hull saw that the Shannon—the swiftest of the enemy's ships—was being towed, not only by all her own boats, but was assisted by a large number from the other ships.

As it was calm, the Shannon appeared to gain a little on the chase, and soon after began firing her bow guns, which she kept up for ten or fifteen minutes, when finding her shot fall short, she ceased—devoting all her attention to towing.

The momentous question on board the Constitution was, how to increase the distance between pursuers and pursued, for it was evident to Captain Hull, and his officers, that her superior number of towing-boats would soon endanger them to the fire of the enemy's whole fleet.

The chase had now been in progress about fourteen hours, and all hands were tired out—which, of course, made matters worse for Old Ironsides.

At this hour—6.30 P. M.—the English ships were so confident of capturing the American, that Captain Broke appointed a prize officer, and crew, to take her into Halifax!

But Captain Broke was too quick. It is better to get your rabbit before preparing to cook it.

Morgan and Hoffman had just replaced Spence and Shubrick in the boats, and, when the latter two came on board, Captain Hull and Lieutenant Morris were consulting as to the best means of increasing the speed of the Constitution.

"The men are very tired, eh, Mr. Spence?" asked the captain.

"Yes, sir, but by no means despondent."

"Ah, yes, but in no condition to tow away from fresh men, which they are constantly placing in their boats—and we must get away!"

The Gentleman looked doubtfully at his commander, but only for a moment, and then said:

"Perhaps we could kedge her, sir."

"Mr. Shubrick thinks so, and he knows these

waters," he added, while Captain Hull stared from one to the other.

"Sound immediately!" ordered the captain.

"Twenty-six fathoms, sir," Morris reported a few minutes later, having himself heaved the lead.

"Ha, ha! What a disappointment is in store for our friends!"

"Out with your kedges, and all the hawser you can find!"

The captain laughed exultantly as the first lieutenant turned away to give the necessary orders, and, then, addressing Spence and Shubrick, smilingly observed:

"I must keep you gentlemen on board—your suggestions are too valuable to waste your time in boat service—especially as we shall now need only the two cutters."

Just how valuable the suggestion was, was seen when, after paying down the hawsers into each cutter, a kedge anchor was run out a long distance ahead, and let go. The crew then clapped on and, encouraged by the officers, walked away with the ship, in a style that astonished the enemy.

"How can they leave us so fast, with less than half the number of boats towing?" was the bewildered question the officers of the Shannon asked each other.

Some hours later, an officer aloft with a glass, discovered the secret of the Constitution's extraordinary speed, but, alas! (for them) the knowledge came too late, although they adopted the same expedient—taking lessons from men who they had boasted would be cleared from the seas, with a few broadsides of their famous "wooden walls."

In the last half of the second dog-watch (between seven and eight P. M.), Old Ironsides was favored with a light breeze, and setting her ensign, fired a shot at the Shannon—the nearest ship astern, but within an hour it fell calm again, and further recourse was had to kedging.

And so, this truly stern chase continued for three days and as many nights—the officers of the American catching naps on decks, and the seamen sleeping at their guns, when not engaged in kedging or towing.

At times, when it fell calm, and the enemy set all their boats towing and kedging their headmost ship—sometimes the Shannon, and, at others, the Guerriere—it seemed impossible for the Constitution to escape, but on the morning of the third day, the pursuers received another lesson—and that really ended the chase.

At about seven A. M. Lieutenant Morris—as did the pursuers—saw there was every indication of a heavy squall, attended by rain, and summoning all hands on deck, sent the men to their stations, but everything was kept fast—not a rope, nor a sail stirred—until the last moment, when, just before the squall struck, the order rung through the frigate:

"Clew up, and clew down!"

"Lively, lads, lively!"

Like tigers, the men sprung to their work, fully conscious of the peril, and understanding the reason of the delay in giving the order.

In an instant all the light sails were furled, the mizzen topsail was reefed, and the ship brought under short sail in a few minutes.

It was a dangerous experiment, requiring the keenest judgment and prompt and skillful obedience, but it was successful, and the result was that, when she had received the full force of the squall, the noble old frigate having sheeted home, and hoisted her fore and topgallant-sails, flew away from the enemy on each bowline, at the rate of eleven knots an hour!

The English fleet, on the other hand, seeing the threatening force of the squall, began to clew up and haul down, and keep off from the wind—without waiting for it—so that when the rain subsided, and the weather cleared a little, they were seen steering in different directions!

This virtually ended the chase of the Constitution, and at eight next morning the fleet hauled off altogether.

Just previous to the departure of the English vessels, a twelfth sail hove in sight, but was warned off by Captain Hull. This vessel, however, appeared capable of taking care of itself, easily outsailing the enemy, and her speed was so great, and her handling so skillful, as finally to attract the attention of all on board the Constitution.

"It's the Stranger—the brig I landed from!" exclaimed Shubrick, after examining the beautiful vessel, and turning to Spence, continued:

"I forgot to tell you that her commander promises to treat you to a surprise."

"Treat me to a surprise?" echoed Spence.

"Who is her commander?"

"Well, he don't seem to be quite sure of that himself," smilingly replied Shubrick, adding:

"But he does know you, and will accompany us until he has a chance of meeting you ashore."

"And you've no idea of his name?"

"Only what he says, and that is—Oxnard is a name he has been known by."

"Oxnard, Oxnard! That name does sound familiar. Did he mention anything else, Jack?"

"Very little, George—and that little I don't care to talk about, but"—earnestly—"it was about a missing sister, and it won't be unwise to be armed when you meet him!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE MEETING OF TWO OLD FRIENDS.

SPENCE was regarded by all who knew him as the soul of honor, and Shubrick stared in astonishment at the agitation exhibited by Gentleman George on receiving his (Shubrick's) warning:

Recovering himself after a few moments, Spence asked:

"Did you learn his Christian name?"

"Harry."

"Harry Lee—it must—can be—none other!" cried the usually self-possessed Gentleman, and in a perplexed way:

"But what can this mean? Years ago, when a mere boy, I was very intimate with Harry, and Laura, his sister, and would have been married ere this had not their uncle, a Mr. Lee, written me that both had left him—Laura eloping, and Harry enlisting in the English Navy."

"Same man, George!" declared Shubrick, adding:

"There's been some lying going on, and you've been the sufferer—or, perhaps, only one of the sufferers by it. Harry is certainly terribly worked up against somebody, and his words—few as they were—seem to point to you."

Again the Gentleman became agitated, but this time with anger.

"By the Eternal!" he fiercely cried, "I'll get to the bottom of this, if it's necessary to quit the service! When I received that letter, I had no good reason to doubt its genuineness, and duty prevented a personal investigation, but now—"

Stopping short, Spence glanced at the Stranger, then about two miles to the windward of the Constitution, and apparently regulating her course and speed by the latter vessel. Then he continued:

"I'd give something to be put aboard that vessel, Jack!"

"Don't talk nonsense, or you'll lose your level-headed reputation," quietly returned the other. "This isn't a privateer, and your business is private."

"And, moreover," continued Shubrick, "you need have no fear of failing to meet him at the first port we put into. As you see, his movements are regulated by ours."

"Yes, that is evident enough," agreed Spence, adding, thoughtfully:

"Nevertheless, if Steve or Laurie—Decatur or Lawrence, I mean—were in command, I would not wait."

Both the lieutenants were off duty, and, warned by something in Spence's tone that the latter would not rest satisfied without an appeal to Captain Hull, Shubrick said:

"Come below, George, and I'll tell you all about how Harry came to put me aboard Old Ironsides."

Not even the captain knew the whole story of the meeting between the commander of the privateer and the lieutenant, and the latter's suggestion struck Spence favorably, so they went below.

Before Shubrick's story was finished, the wind had increased—as he had hoped it would—and the Gentleman abandoned the idea of asking the captain to put him aboard the brig.

A few days later the Constitution put into Boston, where the news of her wonderful escape had already been received from New York, and where her safe arrival created great and joyous excitement.

Not a spar, nor a sail, had been lost; no anchor had been cut away; no gun lost; no boat smashed—and this, in spite of being pursued by eleven vessels, caused great credit to be accorded to the heroic Hull.

Throughout the whole affair, the latter had been cool, resolute, and discreet, but he had been nobly sustained by his gallant officers and crew, and, generously disclaiming all credit for himself, entered a notice in the coffee-house books saying it was to these was due the safety of the now doubly famous Old Ironsides.

Following close on the heels of the latter into Boston came the Stranger, and, scarcely waiting for permission, Gentleman George had a boat out and on its way to the brig, with a message to the commander to meet him ashore as soon as possible.

"I don't like to appear intrusive, George," said Shubrick, when the message had been dispatched, "but I would like to accompany you."

He feared the result of the meeting, but Spence, apparently, did not, for he smilingly invited:

"Come along, by all means! I shall be only too happy to have you and Harry together with me."

As they approached the inn which Spence had appointed as the rendezvous, the commander of the Stranger was seen walking back and forth in front of the hostelry, accompanied by another gentleman in naval uniform.

Eight years had changed Harry from a brave, bright-faced boy, to a stern-looking young man, who, as Spence drew near, half-doubting Shubrick's assertion that it was Harry—held up his hand and fiercely warned:

"Stand back! As you value your life, stand back!"

Gentleman George, usually cool under the most trying circumstances, was rather startled, and somewhat angered, by this reception, but Shubrick restrained words or action, saying:

"One minute, George! Hear what his friend has to say before you speak."

Harry's companion now advanced, and addressing Shubrick, said:

"My friend demands to know from Mr. Spence what has become of her who was known as Laura Lee! It is useless to deny that Mr. Spence can furnish this information, for we know she fled with him, and if it is not given he will first be denounced as a scoundrel, before his comrades—and then shot on sight!"

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO OBSTINATE MEN.

THE effect of the message sent to Spence was the very reverse of what Shubrick feared. Although rather hot when the messenger commenced to speak, the Gentleman grew cooler and cooler, and, when the threat was delivered, laughed scornfully.

"Pardon me," he said, seeing the messenger, who was first lieutenant of the Stranger, flush angrily, "pardon me, but your demand is ridiculous—and your friend a fool—a mad-man!"

"Is that your answer?" demanded the other, adding:

"Let me warn you, sir, my friend is in no mood for trifling. But that he fears he would be unable to restrain himself, he would have addressed you in person!"

"And let me warn you, sir, that it's not safe to send, nor to deliver, another such message! This time, for the sake of the past, I will overlook it."

Spence spoke sternly, and Shubrick, who saw his comrade was in deadly earnest, calling the now perplexed-looking messenger aside, said:

"Since you put me aboard the Constitution a few days ago, I have learned a great deal concerning Mr. Spence's acquaintance with Mr. Oxnard and his sister, and am positive there is some mistake about this affair—some treachery on the part of your friend's relatives or friends."

The messenger shook his head doubtfully, and Shubrick continued:

"Well, ask him if he will talk to me, privately—in that inn, if he wishes—and I will convince him of the truth of what I say."

"Make him consent to talk to me, Alden, for George came here with nothing but good feeling in his heart, and it would be very wrong to allow two such brave fellows, and old friends, to slaughter each other."

"I'll do my best," assured the privateersman, much impressed by Shubrick's earnestness.

"Well, Jack, are you ready to go back?" asked Spence, as Alden hurried back to his commander, who was impatiently striding to and fro.

"Not quite. You go ahead and wait for me at the Bull's Head," replied Shubrick, as he turned toward his friend, having seen the others enter the inn.

Spence stared, frowned slightly, and in a tone meaning the very reverse of the words, said:

"Oh! Very good—don't hurry on my account."

He started off as he spoke, and without awaiting Alden's return, Shubrick entered the inn, where his appearance settled the interview question.

"Five minutes will do!" he exclaimed, on meeting Harry, and with a nod the latter assented.

"Now, you accuse George of abducting, or eloping with, your sister," he began, when they were alone.

"Eloping," interrupted Harry.

"So be it—but I can't see that that's any great crime—especially as you were such good friends?"

"That's what makes it all the worse!" cried the privateersman, fiercely. "The scoundrel! Why didn't he marry her, and not wait until she was the wife of another, before running off with her?"

"Hello! This looks bad," thought the lieutenant, and gravely asked:

"How long ago was this?"

"Six years!"—moodily.

"One more question: how do you know Spence ran off with her?"

"My uncle so informed—so wrote me. I was a midshipman—English—at the time, and away on a long cruise, although I was expected home at the time it happened."

"Indeed! Well, my dear fellow, I guess we've got the right man, now, for just about six years ago George wrote your sister saying he was coming to ask your uncle's consent to their marriage, and in reply, received a letter telling him he need not trouble himself as she had eloped with another."

"That letter was written by your uncle."

Harry looked incredulous.

"It is true, I have seen it, since seeing you!" firmly declared Shubrick.

"Well, you must excuse me, but until I see that letter, I cannot believe in it."

Notwithstanding this assertion, Harry was evidently in doubt, and Shubrick hastened to reply:

"No trouble about that, my dear fellow! The letter's aboard the ship, but you shall see it here to-night."

"George had no reason to doubt the truth of the story at the time, but now he swears he will prove it to the beginning—if he has to give up the service."

"Well—bring me the letter—and thank you for your kindness," slowly returned Harry, and Shubrick hurried away to the Bull's Head, where he found Spence.

"Hello! Through so soon?" carelessly, and rather coolly asked the latter.

"Yes—and don't you be so confoundedly ironical about it!" retorted Shubrick.

"Don't you get so excited—it's bad—dangerous—in this warm weather," advised the Gentleman.

"Drop that tone, George!" sharply exclaimed the other, seeing the humor Spence was in.

"It was about that affair I remained behind, and I'm happy to tell you it's all settled," continued Shubrick.

"Indeed?"

"Yes. I told him about that letter, and now nothing remains but to meet to-night, show him the lying story, and receive his apologies."

Settling a little further back in his chair, and puffing lazily at his cigar, Spence carelessly asked:

"Did you tell him you had seen that infernal letter?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Then I can't see any necessity for exhibiting it. You told him you had seen it—that should—must be—sufficient!"

Shubrick saw how he had been trapped, and, in some alarm, explained:

"But he has another letter—one saying you are the guilty party."

"Did you see it?" asked Spence, but, before his friend could answer, went on:

"It don't matter, though—we'll take his word for that, and he must take yours for the other."

"Don't be a fool, George!" remonstrated Shubrick, thoroughly alarmed at his friend's obstinate tone.

"You are the one who is now making the trouble," he continued; but remonstrance proved unavailing—Spence would not show the letter, and fearing the disappointment would make Harry equally obstinate, and more angry, if the explanation should be delayed until night, the angry peacemaker went back to where he had left Harry.

The latter looked pleased to see Shubrick.

greeted him cordially, and then looked expectant as he remarked:

"You are back much sooner than you expected to be."

"Yes," asserted the peacemaker, "but without the letter."

The pleasant look faded from Harry's face, and, as Shubrick proceeded with a carefully-worded explanation, it was replaced by a frown—observing which the speaker ended with:

"I give you my word as an officer and a gentleman, that I have seen the letter."

After several minutes' silence, Harry said:

"To show my confidence in yourself, I shall not expose him. Instead, he shall have an opportunity to meet me as a gentleman—an honor which is entirely undeserved, and granted, altogether because of my respect for you."

"My challenge will be dispatched at once; we can fight to-morrow morning—and it must be to the death!"

"Shall you be his second, Mr. Shubrick?"

Jack saw that further talk would be useless—indeed he felt that the refusal to produce the letter, almost, if not quite, justified Harry's course, and replied:

"I do not know—I don't feel inclined to have anything further to do with it, but may have to. It's all wrong—all a mistake."

Returning to the Bull's Head, he said:

"Your infernal obstinacy will bring you a challenge."

"Ah! Saves me the trouble," coolly remarked Spence.

CHAPTER IX.

DEFEATING A DETERMINED DUELIST.

THE cool style in which Spence received the notice of the intended challenge angered Shubrick so greatly that, without uttering another word, he threw himself into a chair to await the appearance of Harry's messenger.

The gentleman smiled at this exhibition of temper, but made no remark, continuing his occupation of blowing rings of smoke ceiling-ward, until at the expiration of an hour, Lieutenant Alden entered, and looked inquiringly from one to the other.

"Give it here," directed Spence, and after glancing over the challenge, tossed it to Shubrick, saying:

"Jack, be kind enough to write an acceptance for to-morrow morning—with swords!"

The last words decided Shubrick's course. Had Spence declared in favor of pistols, he would have accepted the office of second—in hope, with the aid of Alden, to disgust the principals by doctoring the weapons, but now—

"No—you will have to excuse me," he replied. "I'll have nothing further to do with such insane business."

"As you please," carelessly returned Spence, and turning to Alden:

"You shall have a formal acceptance, as soon as I've found a friend who will act; but the time suits me; the weapons must suit you, and the place you can agree upon to-night."

The privateersman bowed and retired, and after a minute's thought, the now very self-possessed gentleman asked:

"Are you going back to the ship, Jack?"

"Immediately!" was the emphatic answer.

"Good! Would it be against your conscientious scruples to tell young Morgan to call here?"

"What difference does it make? You'll send, if I don't tell him!" retorted Shubrick.

"Oh, then, you will?"

"Yes—but if I can balk you I will!" and with this threat, which caused his friend much amusement, apparently, Shubrick returned to the Constitution.

"Spence is waiting for you at the Bull's Head," he informed Morgan, adding:

"He is going to fight a duel, and wants you to act as second. If you do act, don't forget, and don't let him forget, that he is fighting the friend of his youth—and that his pig-headed obstinacy is the cause."

Morgan, who was a fine young fellow, stared at his astonishment, and Shubrick explained the whole story.

"I'll do my best—angels can do no more!" exclaimed Morgan, as he prepared to go ashore.

"And I'll do mine—if there's any way to prevent it!" added Shubrick, sitting down for a good, solid "think."

Almost all the officers and men were ashore, and "the Man of Destiny" had the ward-room to himself, but though he passed nearly the whole day there undisturbed, night found him

still without a solution of the question: How can that insane duel be stopped?

Such a thing as informing the authorities never occurred to him—and never would in those days!

Just after dark, Morgan returned to the ship, and, finding Shubrick alone, discontentedly observed:

"Well, it's all arranged! One might as well talk to a stone as Spence!"

"You didn't talk too much?"

"No. I went into the thing as if my sole desire in life was fight, but if 'constant droppings wear stone,' he certainly must be something harder, for my constant references to how regretful it was that the challenge was to the death—the sorrowful necessity of killing the friend of one's youth—and all over a miserable letter—would have fetched any ordinary human being."

Shubrick liked both the principals in the approaching duel—liked them exceedingly, and abhorred the idea of their fighting—so that when Morgan asked where "that letter" was, he was almost prepared for what followed.

"It's somewhere among his papers—in that little desk," Shubrick answered.

"Then why not get and show it?" suggested Morgan.

"No, it would only make him more angry, and determined to go on, and, being the challenged party, he would have the right to insist on it," decided Shubrick, after some hesitation.

"Then I see nothing for it but go ahead, and I must go back now. He's going to remain at the Bull's Head for the night, and is waiting for me."

"Well, if anything occurs to me, I'll know where to find you. Good-night, and good luck to you!"

After Morgan's departure, Shubrick's thoughts kept recurring to the suggestion: "Why not get the letter?" but knowing Spence's nature, he as often set it aside, until near midnight, when another idea occurred to him.

"By Jove, I'll try it!" he exclaimed, starting up and going to Spence's desk—which was a small, fancy, portable affair, more suitable for a lady's boudoir than the ward-room of a war-ship.

The gentleman evidently had been using this fancy piece of furniture just before going ashore, for, to Shubrick's delight, the key was in the lock.

Although it would have been easy enough to force the lock, the finding of the key not only rendered Shubrick's plan all the more feasible, but caused him to feel that it would be successful.

"It is Fate!" he muttered, as he turned the key, and began his search.

Having seen the letter, he knew its appearance, and a few minutes' search convinced him that it was no longer there.

"Ah! Now I understand why George was so angry and obstinate," thought Shubrick, as he relocked the desk.

"He took the letter, intending to show it, and ask Harry's opinion. Harry's doubting him hurt more than the demand for the sister—and that was a rough one!"

Obstacles only serve to increase the resolution of men like Shubrick, and now that he had started to find the letter nothing could stop him. The removal of the letter was a set-back, and he murmured:

"That's unfortunate! If I had it, and could go now to Harry with a good story, there would be one party missing at that fight to-morrow morning."

Just then it struck eight bells (midnight), and as the watch turned out, Shubrick went on deck (he being the officer in charge), intending to exchange with the fourth lieutenant, Hoffman.

As he spoke to the first lieutenant regarding the matter, Captain Hull (who had been attending a public dinner) came aboard, and, hearing Shubrick explain that he had important business ashore, jestingly remarked:

"I trust it will not detain you long, Mr. Shubrick, for, if you're away over twenty-four hours, you'll have to come aboard like last time!"

"Phe-ew!" whistled the lieutenant, as he turned away to find Hoffman. "Now I've got him! He must be on board to-morrow, and I must steal that letter to-night."

The exchange with Hoffman was quickly arranged, and then, Shubrick, promising to return in time to take the second dog-watch at six o'clock, hurried to the Bull's Head Inn.

It was about one o'clock when he arrived be-

fore the inn, which, of course, was closed as tight as a drum, but a tremendous pounding brought a sleepy-looking individual—the landlord—to the door.

"What d'ye mean by disturbing honest folks at this time o' night?" demanded the landlord, angry and suspicious.

As before mentioned, Shubrick was a man of commanding presence, and when he sternly commanded:

"Hush, sir! Go instantly, and quietly, and awaken Mr. Morgan. I must see him immediately!"

The landlord hastened to obey.

In a very short time, Morgan (followed by the landlord, under pretense of lighting him downstairs, but really through curiosity), came down, and met Shubrick enjoying a cigar in the bar, or tap-room.

"Gracious! What manner of a being is this, who nearly breaks in your door, lights your candles, and makes himself generally at home in your house? All without so much as by your leave!"

Partly guessing the landlord's thoughts, Shubrick handed him a dollar, saying:

"Pardon me for disturbing you, but it was necessary."

"Good-night, sir."

The last significant words caused the landlord to retreat to an adjoining room, and in a low tone, Shubrick immediately began:

"George has that letter in his pocket. Go get it, and I will take it to Harry; that will delay matters twenty-four hours—if not altogether, for we sail within that time. You must tell him that, as soon as he sees the other party is not on the ground: say you received a message to that effect to-night. Go ahead!"

Morgan nodded, and without a word started up-stairs, returning within a few minutes with a time-worn sheet of paper.

"It was on his table with four letters he had just finished," Morgan explained, handing it to Shubrick.

"Don't arouse him until I get back!" warned the latter, as he started on his errand of peace.

CHAPTER X.

THE "CHARM" AT WORK AGAIN.

AT eight o'clock in the morning of the proposed duel, Lieutenant Shubrick, standing near the gangway of the Constitution, was relieved, but not surprised, to see Spence and Morgan come aboard.

He greeted them rather coolly, and, quick to notice this, the former marched up to him, saying:

"See here, Jack! You are not the man I take you for, if you are going to feel hurt over that affair? It has fallen through, anyhow!"

"Glad of it!" was the hearty response, as the speaker grasped the hand which Spence proffered.

"I'm well aware of that," returned the latter, "and if you had been ashore, I'd know who was the cause of it."

And, looking rather perplexed, Spence started for the ward-room, followed by Morgan, whose handsome countenance was distorted by a broad grin.

There was no liberty ashore during the day, and Spence, who applied for leave to board the Stranger, was politely informed that to go meant to stay.

"Indeed, Mr. Spence," said the captain, "I trust you'll not mention having asked leave, for there are several volunteers who wish to join the ship. They would say I should have let you go and have replaced you from among their number."

"Of course," he continued, "being a volunteer, you can go if you wish, but I prefer you to any of the others."

That settled Lieutenant Spence's desire to investigate the failure of the other party to be on the dueling-ground at the appointed time.

During the day Captain Hull filled up with water, the only thing lost or thrown away to lighten the Constitution during that memorable chase, and laid in fresh provisions, the receiving and stowage of which kept every one busy, but Shubrick and Morgan managed to exchange a few words.

"How did you manage it?" asked the former, while the two were below in the gun-room for a few minutes, Spence being in the forehold looking after some stowage.

"That's too long a story to tell now; but Harry's a fine fellow, and was much relieved on seeing that letter."

"And your part—how did he take the disappointment?"

"Very quietly—queerly, perhaps I should say. He seemed more puzzled than anything else; but, like your story, mine is too long—and too good—to attempt to tell now."

Toward night, when everything was ship-shape, every one, including the captain himself, was on the *qui vive*. The officers and crew expected the order to raise the anchor, but it did not come—because the captain's expected orders or information failed to reach him.

Next day was passed in the same way, and on the third day officers were allowed to go ashore for a few hours, but this liberty came too late to be of service to Spence, for on the morning following that of the proposed duel the Stranger left port.

On the morning of the fifth day Captain Hull, apparently tired of waiting, gave orders to weigh anchor, and the Constitution sailed out of Boston Harbor, leaving many anxious hearts behind her, for it was known, or presumed that she had gone to pick a quarrel with the first British frigate he should sight—more particularly the *Guerriere*.

The cause of Captain Hull's feeling against that particular vessel, was the following challenge indorsed on the register of the John Adams, a little American merchantman, with which the *Guerriere* fell in, shortly after the escape of the Constitution:

"Captain Dacres, commander of his Britannic Majesty's frigate *Guerriere*, of forty-four guns, presents his compliments to Commodore Rodgers, of the United States frigate *President*, and will be very happy to meet him, or any other American frigate of equal force to the *President*, off Sandy Hook, for the purpose of having a social *tête-à-tête*."

When the John Adams arrived in New York, this challenge was copied in all the newspapers of the day, and created a profound sensation.

With respect to naval battles, people generally, had become accustomed to believe the English Navy invincible. They had so long triumphed over the French and Spanish ships-of-war, and gained so many easy victories by their superior seamanship, that (with a vanity which rendered them obnoxious to all other nations) the English, themselves, believed one of their sloops-of-war a match for any foreign frigate.

1812 changed all this—broke the spell. Confidence is a great help to success—until it becomes overweening. Then look out for squalls!

From the very beginning, Shubrick's luck followed the noble old ship, and soon every one on board was a convert to the belief of Spence (and of the captain and senior lieutenants) in the "Man of Destiny."

Running first off Halifax and Cape Sable, in hopes of falling in with a British frigate, the Constitution, after three or four days' unsuccessful waiting, ran to eastward, then hauled in, and took a station off the Gulf of St. Lawrence, near Cape Race—and then the "luck" commenced.

On the second day a light English brig was taken, and not being worth sending in, Captain Hull took out the crew and burned her.

On the third day a brig was taken and burned.

But this was very tame work—even when followed by the chase of a ship-of-war, convoying four sail—one of them an armed brig, which was captured and burned, while the others (some of which contained prisoners to the ship-of-war) were sent home.

And then came a day when a large sail was sighted.

"I told you it would come!" exclaimed Spence, when the hail came from aloft:

"Sail ho! Sail ho!"

"Whereaway?"

"Bearing about east sou'east, sir!" reported the "Man of Destiny," who had gone aloft with a glass.

"Under every rag she will stand, sir," ordered Captain Hull, in response to Lieutenant Morris's inquiring glance.

"Can you make her out?" he continued, to Shubrick.

"No, sir."

Snatching a glass, Spence sprang into the rigging, but it was some time before even he, keen-eyed as he was famous for being, descended to report.

"She's a frigate, sir—and English—or I'm a Dutchman!"

"Eh? What's that?" asked the captain, amid a general smile.

"Beg pardon, sir—I was a little excited. I can see her to the heads of her courses. Her lower sails have lifted within five minutes, and she looks decidedly English!" explained Spence.

The stranger had been sighted at two; it was now three P. M., and the Constitution having been gaining rapidly on the chase, all soon saw that the Gentleman was right.

"Is he not making signals, Mr. Spence?" demanded the captain, after surveying the stranger for several minutes, and handing the lieutenant his glass as he spoke.

"Yes, sir—and they're English," answered the sharp-eyed lieutenant, still watching the chase.

"Yes, sir," he continued, in a few minutes, "she's an English frigate—and looks very much like the *Guerriere*—and waiting for us!"

Spence was right—it was the challenger.

CHAPTER XI.

"IRONSIDES" AND WOODEN WALLS.

CAPTAIN HULL gazed intently at the stranger for several minutes, and then confirmed the volunteer's words:

"I hope—and believe you are right!" he exclaimed, and after a lightning-like survey of Old Ironsides, quietly ordered:

"Send down your royal-yards, Mr. Morris!"

"Clear the ship, and beat to quarters!"

In a few moments came a roll of the drum, and with the first tap, the men (hitherto engaged in such necessary duties as precede an action, or gazing at the strange ship), hurried to their respective stations, the officers following to inquire into the condition of their several commands, while the munitions of war were drawn from their places of deposit.

The officers approached to report their various divisions in readiness to engage, and then ensued that deep and grave silence which renders a crew at quarters a most imposing sight.

So intent were the people of the Constitution, first in gazing at the strange ship, and later in preparing for action, that it was not until the order: "Give the boarders their pikes and boarding-axes!" was being issued, that another sail was noticed close astern.

The new-comer was a brig, under an enormous spread of canvas, and about a quarter-mile astern of the Constitution, which vessel she quickly overhauled.

"It's the Stranger!" exclaimed Spence, who was on the poop with Captain Hull.

"But scarcely with another lieutenant," smilingly returned the captain.

"Probably wishes to give us some information, sir," suggested Morris.

This suggestion proved to be the fact, when, a few minutes later, the Stranger, having shifted her helm, quartered across the stern of the Constitution, and a young man, hanging in the lee rigging, hailed:

"Aho! the Constitution! Beware of false signals! Yonder frigate is the *Guerriere*!"

"Good luck to you!"

And with a wave of his hand, Harry was swept by, with a smiling nod to the astonished Gentleman George, who appeared to be the person he was more particularly addressing.

"That's a friendly fellow!" commented the captain.

"Yes, sir; and, like Shubrick, seems to have a knack of being in the neighborhood when there's any trouble in view," remarked Morris, adding:

"He's running dangerously close to the Britisher—and, by Jove, see that!"

The Stranger, under full sail—and she carried an enormous spread of it—had run rapidly away from the Constitution, which was under reduced canvas, and when just out of long gunshot of the *Guerriere*, fired a gun, and flung the American colors to the breeze.

Up to this, neither of the vessels had shown any colors, but now the *Guerriere* (which was lying hove to) hoisted an English ensign at each mast-head, and the Constitution set her colors.

"Leeward! Keep to leeward, Mr. Morris!" ordered Captain Hull, and the Constitution bore up and ran as ordered, to take the enemy to the best advantage.

When within about two miles of the *Guerriere*, Captain Hull hauled his wind, ordered all the light sails taken in, and reefed his top-sails.

"Double-shot all your guns, Mr. Morris!" he continued, and then the ball—or rather the *tête-à-tête*—was opened by the *Guerriere*.

Wearing and yawing about—to rake and avoid being raked—the latter ship opened fire.

The first few broadsides, however, did little or no damage—Captain Hull had calculated his distance nicely, and the shot barely reached Old Ironsides.

But the ball had been opened, and Spence, who

had been assigned to no particular duty, asked what he should do.

"As one of Decatur's former fire-eating friends, you shall have a post of honor," answered the captain, with a grim smile.

"You will join Mr. Read—there is usually plenty of work there," he quickly added.

Mr. Read was third lieutenant, which rank gave him command of the midship division guns—a berth that is usually called the "Slaughter-House," and it was, therefore, with an equally grim smile that the volunteer returned thanks for the captain's selection.

The Man of Destiny, as fifth lieutenant, commanded the quarter-deck guns, and was, of course, in the midst of the stirring scene that occurred toward the end of the engagement—but we are getting ahead of our story.

Finding his shot comparatively harmless, Captain Dacres bore up and ran off the wind under three topsails and jib, with the wind on the quarter, to invite Captain Hull to a combat at close quarters.

The invitation was promptly accepted.

"Set your main-topgallant and foresail!" ordered the commander of the Constitution.

"Run her alongside, and close with her!"

And fifteen minutes after the English frigate filled her maintopsail Old Ironsides was on the way to her.

As the Constitution approached she was hulled several times, and some of her people were wounded, but not a shot was fired in return—nor had she fired any thus far—and, becoming impatient, Lieutenant Morris came aft to the quarter-deck and suggested:

"The men are very eager to commence the action, captain, and it is difficult to restrain them. Shall we return their fire, sir?"

Captain Hull was closely watching every movement of the *Guerriere*, and, without removing his eyes from her, quietly replied:

"Mr. Morris, I'll tell you when to fire. Stand ready, and see that not a shot is thrown away!"

The Constitution was now ranging up to within half pistol-shot, and as she began to double on the quarter of the *Guerriere*, the captain, seeing his opportunity, gave the much-desired order to fire the first division—and in tones that made officers as well as men jump.

"The next, sir!" he continued, in thundering tones, and in the same breath:

"Pour in the whole broadside!"

A moment after there was a terrific explosion from the Constitution.

The *Guerriere* reeled and trembled as if from the shock of an earthquake, her mizzen-mast was shattered, rigging cut to pieces, and sails in rags. Men lay scattered all over the decks, and several of the guns were surging to and fro among the dead and wounded.

"By heavens, that ship is ours!" exclaimed Captain Hull, as he saw the effect of this terrible broadside.

"To your work, lads! To your work!"

The two frigates were now nearly abreast of each other, and for ten minutes a furious cannonading was kept up on both sides—and then crash! went the Englishman's mizzen-mast—twenty-five minutes after the Constitution received the invitation.

Ranging slowly ahead, still keeping up a tremendous fire, the Constitution luffed short round the bows of the *Guerriere*, to prevent being raked, but, unfortunately, shot into the wind, and fell foul of her adversary—the *Guerriere*'s bowsprit coming in contact with the mizzen shrouds of the well-named Old Ironsides.

"All hands to board!" was the order on both sides, but as each ship kept up a brisk fire of musketry, while in collision, the customary and expected, "Boarders away!" did not follow.

But as if fearing to trust to the musketry, and animated by the same spirit, Morris, Spence, Shubrick, Alwyn, the sailing-master, Bush, the marine officer, and others, sprang upon the taffrail to board or repel boarders.

The first mentioned received a musket ball in the abdomen, but bravely remained at his post, and the last mentioned two were wounded—one mortally.

Spence saw a marine about to shoot him, but a pistol cracked beside him, the man fell as he pulled the trigger, and the Gentleman escaped almost certain death.

There was considerable sea on at this moment, and now the badly wounded fore and main masts of the *Guerriere* crashed over the side, leaving the English frigate a helpless wreck, wallowing in the trough of the sea—say thirty-five minutes after inviting the Constitution to "come and see" her.

The ships now separated, and the Constitution

made sail, and, hauling on board her fore and main tacks, ran off a short distance to windward, where she cleared ship to renew the action.

It was not necessary, however, for when Captain Dacres saw Old Ironsides coming down athwart his bows, to give him the raking *coup-de-grace*, he very wisely hauled down the English Jack. And thus ended the first naval battle of any consequence in the war of 1812.

Loss on board the *Constitution*: 7 killed and 7 wounded.

Loss of the *Guerriere*—killed, wounded, and missing, 101!

Moreover, the English frigate was so badly injured, and in danger of sinking, that it was deemed necessary to burn her, which was done.

"Britannia needs no bulwark,
No towers along the steep;
Her march is o'er the mountain waves,
Her home is on the deep."

CAMPBELL.

"The winds and seas are Britain's wide domain,
And not a sail but by (her) permission spreads" (1)
British Naval Register.

Please, ma'am, may we live?

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER THE BATTLE—SPENCE SUSPICIOUS.

THE moment the *Guerriere* struck her colors, a young man, attired in naval undress, hurried to Captain Hull on the quarter-deck, and whispered a few words to that highly-elastic gentleman. Captain Hull responded smilingly, and shook the stranger's hand, when the latter left him, and passed over the side of the ship into a four-oared boat, which immediately pulled away to a brig lying hove to about a mile away.

The brig was the *Stranger*, and the young man her commander, who had come on board the *Constitution* a minute previous to the rush to repel boarders, and it was his pistol-shot that killed the marine, and in all probability saved Spence's life.

Harry had boarded the frigate almost unobserved, in the heat of the engagement, and departed unknown to all save the captain and Shubrick—Morgan being engaged in looking after a boat to board the prize, and Spence leaving the "Slaughter House" barely in time to see him go over the side.

The Gentleman was sharp-witted, however, as well as sharp-sighted, and happening to turn toward the quarter-deck, while gazing at the boat pulling to the brig, caught Shubrick smiling at his perplexity. The truth flashed upon him, and going aft, he demanded:

"That is Harry Lee, is he not, Jack?"

"Harry, at all events, whatever the other name may be," laughed Shubrick.

"What was he doing here?"

"Taking a crack at his old friends—and, incidentally, saving your life."

"Eh? saving my life!"

"Well, that's the way it looked to me, but we were somewhat busy ourselves at the time, and I may have been mistaken—still, as I said, it looked as if the man who dropped that marine—"

"And he was that man?" interrupted Spence.

"Just so. You'll have an opportunity of thanking him when we get back to Boston."

"Well, I'll be—blest!" muttered the Gentleman, and walked back to assist in clearing up the "Slaughter House," which, as usual, had suffered most of the *Constitution's* wonderfully small loss.

While attending to his own duties on the quarter-deck, Shubrick kept an eye on his friend, and was much amused by the latter's conduct.

For a few minutes, Spence would work with the energy of a half-dozen, directing and helping the men. Then, suddenly, he would stop altogether, and his blood and powder stained face would be turned toward the *Stranger*, at which he would stare until some question from the men would recall him to his duty.

"I'll bet that he has forgotten all about having been wounded, and—for once in his life—is regardless of his appearance," was Shubrick's mental comment.

He had, himself, as usual, escaped without a scratch, but Spence had been slightly wounded in the head by a flying splinter.

"That killing of the marine has taken all the starch out of him," continued Shubrick, "and he won't rest easy until he knows more about that duel."

The truth of at least part of this was proved next night, when, having taken off the officers and crew of the *Guerriere*, and burnt the vessel, the *Constitution* was bowling along on the way to Boston.

Shubrick and Morgan were in the ward-room, chatting with one of the English officers, and when the latter left them, the second in the late proposed duel asked:

"What the mischief has revived Spence's interest in that beautifully squelched duel?"

"I thought he had forgotten all about it, but he's been at me all day—working the 'pump' most vigorously."

Shubrick laughed softly, and remarked:

"That was one fight I spoiled, eh, Charley?"

"Yes," smilingly agreed Morgan, "but what has set him going?"

In answer, the story of the killing of the marine was narrated, and Shubrick added:

"The brig has gone on ahead to Boston, and they'll meet there, of course, but you needn't have any fear of being called on again—he's worrying himself sick, trying to think of some scheme by which he can get rid of his obligation to Harry, without—metaphorically—going down on his marrow-bones."

"Well, I hope he'll find some way," remarked Morgan, laughing at Shubrick's way of describing their comrade's situation.

It was on the 19th of August, 1812, that Captain Hull had the pleasure of proving that the Wooden Walls of England were not altogether invincible—not when opposed to Old Ironsides, at all events—and on the 30th of the same month he arrived in Boston Harbor.

An artillery company, posted on the wharf, welcomed Captain Hull with a federal salute, which was returned by the *Constitution*, the principal streets of the city were beautifully decorated with American flags, cheers were loud and frequent, and joy heartfelt and universal.

A splendid entertainment was given by the citizens of Boston to the captain and his brave officers.

The citizens of New York raised a large sum of money to purchase swords, which were presented to him and his gallant officers. Philadelphia purchased two magnificent pieces of plate, to be given to the naval hero, and his first lieutenant. In Baltimore the flags of all the vessels in the harbor were displayed and a grand salute fired—the whole country, in fact, was electrified by Hull's victory.

Amid all the honors and attentions lavished on everybody belonging to the victorious frigate, Spence—ranking really as a lieutenant-commander—would have figured prominently, had he not expressed a wish to avoid appearing in public, to which Captain Hull wonderingly and regretfully acceded.

As the *Constitution* drew near Boston, the Gentleman had grown more and more grave, almost sad, and perplexed-looking, which, while it excited surprise and curiosity among his other comrades, only amused Shubrick and Morgan.

"He's paying for his confounded obstinacy now," observed the former. "Let him suffer!"

"All right!" asserted Morgan. "Since he will be relieved on meeting Lee or Oxnard, in Boston, I won't speak."

This was the upshot of a suggestion, made by Morgan, that they should reveal the secret of Harry's absence on the morning of the proposed duel, but Shubrick objected, saying it would be time enough when they reached Boston.

"He will learn it from Harry himself, then," said Shubrick.

And he did, but not in the manner which the conspirators expected.

"It isn't fear, and it can't be that he's ashamed to meet Harry—what can it mean?" wondered Shubrick, on learning that Spence was not going ashore.

"Better tell him now," suggested Morgan.

Shubrick hesitated, but finally decided to wait until evening.

"He may wish to go ashore unknown to us," he said. "If he does not go, we will tell him to-night."

"All right; but let us hurry!" returned the other, eager to get ashore.

It was late when they returned—nearly midnight—but Spence was pacing the quarter-deck, awaiting them.

"There's something up, sure!" exclaimed Morgan, noting the Gentleman's quick, nervous stride, as he performed the "fisherman's walk"—three paces and a turn.

"Egad, you're right!" returned Shubrick, adding, in a thoughtful tone:

"It's too late, now, but I wish your suggestion had been followed. He's liable to challenge both of us, and, unless it is to save you, I will not fight him—and, even then, I shall fire in the air."

They were now at the head of the gangway,

and further conversation was cut short by Spence, who came forward, saying:

"Come below, Shubrick, I want to talk to you."

"Quiet enough," commented Morgan, "but so he was the night before he was to hack, and be hacked, to death!"

CHAPTER XIII.

CORNY SULLIVAN.

ON learning that Spence wished to remain on board, and positively would not join in any of the festivities—public or private—in honor of the victory of the *Constitution*, Captain Hull said:

"Very well, Mr. Spence—it is both a loss and a gain, for I suppose you will have no objection to occupying my cabin, and taking charge of the ship?"

"None at all, sir, and I thank you," returned the lieutenant. "I shall not care to be absent except for a couple of hours to-day."

Shubrick, who knew nothing of that part of the arrangement, was, therefore, somewhat surprised on finding that it was to the cabin Spence led the way.

"I am in command, and occupying the cabin for the present," quietly explained Spence, and seating himself at the table, tossed a letter to his friend, saying:

"You can explain that, I've no doubt, and when you have done so, I wish to get some information from you."

Rather amazed at this quietly-spoken prelude, Shubrick glanced at the signature. It was signed "Harry Lee," and was as follows:

"I sign as 'Harry Lee,' because it is by that name you knew me, but am now known as Oxnard—although not certain I have any right to that name."

"There is at the moment neither time nor space to explain and apologize for my action in challenging you, but, this I will say: your letter and mine were written by the same hand—and mine caused me, partly, to come to this country seeking your life."

"Both letters appear to have been written by my uncle—or, rather, the man you knew, and who, until recently, I believed to be my uncle, and, through one of my officers who has just joined me, I learn that he is in South Carolina—last seen in Charleston."

"I am going now to find him and demand an explanation. On my return, full explanations and apologies shall be offered you."

"Well?"

Shubrick had finished reading and was gazing thoughtfully at this strange epistle when Spence uttered the inquiring monosyllable, and he noted that his comrade was graver-looking than ever.

"Well?" he repeated, and then went on and explained that he had shown the letter to Harry.

"And whatever blame there is, attaches to me. Morgan simply did what I could not."

"Thank you," was the quiet rejoinder. "Now that I understand that part, will you kindly give me some information as to the quickest way of reaching Charleston—Harry must have my letter in his possession as soon as possible."

"And," continued Spence, "it might—probably would—be of great assistance to have letters of introduction to people there—can you help me in that way, too, Jack?"

"Can I help you? Great heavens, man, I'll go with you!" cried the warm-hearted, handsome giant, and with a glance at the elegant, but deceitfully delicate-looking figure of his companion, added:

"It's rough traveling by land, and I'm glad you consulted me. I'm pretty well known, and not likely to be interfered with."

"Again, thank you! But, Jack, you've got a ship—stick to it! I've got none, and even if a broad pennant were offered me to remain here, I'd go to-morrow, but it's my affair, and you must not think of leaving."

Spence spoke quietly, firmly—even affectionately, and Shubrick saw that to insist would be simply to annoy him.

"Very well, George—it shall be as you say," he quietly assented, adding:

"I can give you letters to the best—most influential people in the State, and you shall have them before starting—but, regarding your trip—you will hardly be able to go by water?"

"I do not know—that will depend upon what you say—money is not an object, but time is."

"Then, George, go by land; traveling the other way is too uncertain nowadays. I'll give you the route and all particulars."

They talked long—until daybreak—about

Spence's trip South, and his plans of coöperating with Harry while there, and then Shubrick, having written several letters of introduction, retired.

About ten next morning, Captain Hull came on board, and Spence (being immediately relieved of further duty) started on his journey South.

"I will accompany you as far as New York," said Shubrick, and, Spence offering no objection, they took the night-coach from Boston.

Leaving the Gentleman to pursue his journey by way of his native city—Philadelphia—we will, for the present, follow the fortunes of the "Man of Destiny" in New York.

After seeing his friend start off in the stage-coach from New York to Philadelphia, Shubrick, who knew but little of the former city, took lodgings at an inn, intending to remain several days looking about him.

During the early part of the evening he took a walk, and while crossing the Bowling Green (engaged in thinking over the strange letter Spence had received from Harry) was a little startled by a voice at his elbow:

"I'll fight ye for a dhrink, sor!"

The Green was pretty well crowded at the time, and being a big, powerful fellow, Shubrick—though startled by the strange, sudden salute—was rather amused, and inclined to laugh on seeing the man who had accosted him so queerly.

He saw a small—little, would be the more appropriate word—man, about fifty-five years of age, weazen-faced, and by no means poorly dressed. The little man was so stooped that he appeared—to the casual observer—to be hump-backed, but even if he were, it is doubtful if the affliction could have made Corny Sullivan any more cross-grained than he was.

"Well," said the tall, handsome giant, twirling his long, golden mustache, as he towered over the little man. "I'm afraid you'd lose the drink."

"Faith, if I did, it's dhry ye'd go," quickly returned Mr. Sullivan, adding:

"But don't be so sure about it—I've tossed many a man, but no man iver tossed me."

Shubrick laughed outright—he had been smiling all the while—and the little man grew indignant, and, seeing this, the lieutenant asked:

"Considering what you've told me, I should be afraid to tackle you—what then?"

"Oh, divil a fear o' ye—ye'r too cons'ated since ye licked the English t'other day! Sure, it was bekase ye war an officer, I spoke to ye at all. It's three days now since a mouthful o' mate wint into me, but d'ye think I'd ax any o' thim spalpeens"—indicating the people on the Green—"for anythin'? No! I'd die, fursht!"

"But, suppose I won't fight?"

"Well, thin, I'll sing yea a song o' th' Ould Sod, but"—confidentially—"I'd take th' fight, if I war you, for I've got a v'ice like a file!"

"Then we'll defer the song till you've had the drink," laughed the lieutenant, "but, if you have had nothing to eat for three days, why do you ask for a drink?"

"I didn't ax for a dhrink! I offered t' throw—t'fight ye for wan!" retorted Corny, for as he will figure hereafter, we may as well become familiar.

"Very true," admitted Shubrick, "but why?"

"Well, thin, if ye wan t' know, bekase a dhrink only costs thruppence, an' a m'ale—if I got me fill—'u'd cost a pound! Faith, I'm that hungry, I could ate a man—a nagur!"

In spite of his efforts to appear grave, Shubrick could not refrain from laughing at the savage earnestness of Corny's speech.

"Gracious, man, but you must be hungry!" he laughed. "How came you in that condition?"

"Bekase I'm a fool, I suppose! I'd 'a' been a hundrehd pound th' better t'-day if I wasn't."

"How's that?"

"Simple enough, faith! Th' masther axed m' t' give his son—or whatever the divil he is—a rack on th' skull, but, be jabers! I wouldn't—n' lost th' hundrehd pound!"

"What was your master's name?" asked Shubrick, much interested.

"Misther Lee—dang his buttons!"

CHAPTER XIV.

CORN'S QUEER COUNSEL.

AS nay be imagined, Corny's announcement of his murderous master's name made Shubrick anxious to know more, and he asked:

"Who is this Mr. Lee?—where is he?"

"He an Englishman—bad luck to him! But divil a how I know where he is. I left him in

Charleston! He ordered me t' get out, an' we came near guttin' aich other."

"By heavens! it's the same man!" exclaimed Shubrick, instantly connecting the attack on Harry, Corny's statement, and the former, and Gentleman George's trip to Charleston, but oddly enough forgetting the gentleman he had met at Colonel Drayton's—his Mr. Lee—him of the fraudulent lawsuit.

"Faith, I dunno—mebbe it is," remarked Corny, reminding Shubrick of the fact that he had a listener, as well as a companion.

"He's a head divil, at any rate!" added Mr. Lee's ex-valet.

They were now back at Shubrick's lodgings, an inn, which, as the sign proclaimed, could care for both man and beast, and certainly Corny proved himself entitled to be classed among (although disgracing) the latter.

"You certainly do not feel like eating a negro now?" queried Shubrick, when Corny had finished.

"No—I feel like a white man now," responded Corny, complacently.

"What?" gasped Jack. "Feel like eating a white man?"

"Aw—g'lang," returned Corny, in tones of disgust. "D'ye think it's a cannonball [cannibal] I am?"

"Oh, I see. Now, to begin with—would you mind telling me your name?"

"Divil a bit! What's yours?"

"Shubrick," gravely replied Jack. "And yours?"

"Corny Sullivan, sor, but the' call me Corny for short." (1)

"Well, Corny, have you any objection to telling me whose skull it was that you were asked to crack?"

"Sure it's an officer ye are—not a 'peeler'?" counterquestioned the little man.

"Certainly."

"Faith, thin, what d'ye want t' know that for?"

Shubrick considered, for several minutes, how he should answer this question, and at length asked:

"Are you engaged—in the service of anybody?"

"I'm not, sor."

"Very good. Do you wish to come into mine?"

"Sure it's not a recruitin' sargeant ye are?"

"No, no!" replied Shubrick, laughing, half-angrily at the little man's suspicions. "Into my personal service is what I mean."

"I do, sor."

"Then you may consider yourself engaged from this moment and the first duty I shall require of you, is to tell me who it was you were to kill, and how you came to be asked to do it."

Corny looked doubtfully at the lieutenant, and knowing the loyalty of the average Irishman—even in a bad cause—Shubrick urged:

"You certainly have little reason to like (and less to respect) this man, Lee, and I am very anxious to know if the man to be killed was a friend of mine, in order to warn him."

"No, bad luck to him! I don't like a bone in his body, but 'twas bekase he knew I was a Ribbonman, an' in the risin' uv '98, that he hired me."

"What has that to do with it?"

"Well, he knew—or belaved—I wouldn't be-thray him—an' I don't see how I can."

"Very well," said Shubrick, after a few moments' thought, "I shall not ask you to betray anything, but, if Harry Lee, or Oxnard, were your friend, would you not warn him to be aware of your late master?"

"Faith, I would!" promptly replied Corny.

That was sufficient for the lieutenant. He, now, was satisfied that "Mr. Lee" was the fountain-head of the attacks on Harry, and having secured lodging for Corny, retired to his room, bidding the latter follow.

"I am going to write a letter warning Harry," he announced, on reaching his apartments, "but, as I am almost altogether in the dark, you must tell me what to write—what to warn him against."

"Ag'inst everythin', an' everybody," returned the little man, and then—spitefully:

"I hate th' ould hound, anyhow, an', as long as ye didn't thry t' force me, I'll tell ye this: If ye'll let me carry yer lettther, I'll upset some of Misther Lee's plans."

"Very nice, but how am I to trust you, since you won't trust me? You are now in my service, and yet you refuse to help me to save my friend, against a man who has treated you badly—to say the least, while in his service."

Corny hesitated for a few moments, and Shubrick felt hopeful of getting at the bottom of

the mysterious attacks on Harry, for he was certain that the little man could, if he would, clear up the mystery.

"No, I'm nayther a thrader nor a thraitor," decided Corny, "but if ye will aither sind me, or take me yerself, I'll see that no harrum comes to yer fri'nd."

"But sure ther' can be on'y wan thing necessary t' do—let him g' back t' th' ould buck, an' tell him if he don't sthoph it, there'll be throuble betune him an' the girrul he calls his daughter."

"Laura?" asked Shubrick, with difficulty concealing his anxiety.

"That same, though sorra a dhrop's blood she's to him."

"Where is she now?"

There was a great assumption of careless indifference in the tone and manner of this question, but Corny was not at all deceived, and his shrewd, gray eyes twinkled maliciously as he remarked:

"Oh, sure, that don't matther—ye'd not give a fi'penny bit t' know that."

Somewhat disconcerted by Corny's ironical rejoinder, Shubrick for several minutes remained silent, seeking a channel—in thought—through which he might unlock this cross-grained old man's lips.

Money, he believed, would be useless, and, failing to think of anything more powerful, he was about to appeal to the little man's hatred of the English, when the latter, as if coming to a sudden determination, exclaimed:

"Wait till to-morra mornin', sor, an' I'll do me best for ye!"

"The lettther can't go very far t'night," continued Corny, "an', if ye'll say the word, I'll be off now, an' see what I kin l'arn about that ould omadhaun."

"Don't ax me how or where I'm goin', sor, an' ye'll make it all the aisier for me, an' better for yerself."

"Go right ahead," directed Shubrick, without exhibiting the slightest emotion of any kind—though greatly surprised and a little suspicious.

"Thank ye, sor," returned Corny, picking up his hat, "I'm goin' t' where there's nayther love nor likin' for anythin' English, an' mebbe I won't be back before mornin'."

"Go right ahead," repeated Shubrick. And the little man departed.

CHAPTER XV.

"I AM LAURA LEE."

FOR a few minutes after his "man's" departure the Man of Destiny remained buried in thought, at times slightly suspicious, though he was of an open and confiding nature.

He was puzzled by Corny's suddenly-expressed willingness to help him, or, rather, Harry, and not as yet understanding the nature of that little bundle of obstinacy, failed to see that his own want of persistence in pushing the request for what Corny would designate, and, in case he had would look upon, as "treachery," was the real cause.

Drive Corny you could not—lead, or pique, or coax, and you could bring him or send him, to use his own words, "through fire an' wather."

"Well, it will turn out all right, I hope," soliloquized Shubrick, and, glancing at his watch and seeing it was not yet nine o'clock, continued:

"I'll go finish my walk, in peace, this time, I trust, although there would be no objection to meeting another Corny Sullivan. He's honest, that is pretty certain—his unwillingness to tell what he knows of Lee, proves that he can be faithful, even in the face of ill-treatment."

Thus soliloquizing, Jack sauntered downtown, wondering what the morrow would bring forth, for he was deeply interested in the mystery surrounding Harry and those connected with him.

But this was a "destiny" evening, and the lieutenant was doomed to be disappointed in his wish, both as to finishing his walk in peace and of meeting another Corny Sullivan.

There was trouble in the air that night, and Jack, walking around the King's Farm (at Fulton street and Broadway, west to the river), was, of course, going straight toward it.

The night was warm, and having turned out of Broadway into Fulton street, Shubrick sauntered along toward the broad Hudson, intending to pass a quiet half-hour, and smoke a good cigar on its banks.

Right ahead of him, and walking at about the same gait, under the trees which then lined the roadway, were a lady and gentleman, but Jack, buried in thought, did not notice them, until his attention was attracted by the voice of the former.

"No, sir!" she exclaimed, in ringing tones, "and what has led you to make such an insane—not to say insulting—proposition, I cannot imagine! You certainly had no encouragement to do—we—I am going home!"

It was about nine o'clock, the moon had not yet risen, and the people who were out—the night being very warm—were either gathered around the Bowling Green (where the game that gave it its name was in former years indulged in), or on the river banks.

Although he had overheard the lady's words accidentally, Shubrick felt as if he were to blame for not having made her, and her companion, aware of his proximity, and, expecting them to turn back instantly, stepped off the walk into the roadway, that they—or, rather, she—might be saved the mortification of knowing a stranger had heard what was said.

Supposing the others would pass going in the opposite direction, Jack walked rapidly along the dusty roadway for a half-minute, and then found he was wrong. The half-minute's walk had brought him to within a few feet of the couple on the walk, and he now heard the lady scornfully exclaim:

"And you are an English officer, and claim to be a gentleman! Why, sir, you are a disgrace to those of your profession and nation whom I have met, and a libel on what you claim to be!"

"Leave me instantly, or I will cry for assistance—and Heaven help you, if you compel me to do so, and an American or any other gentleman should respond."

The fellow—we must drop the title gentleman—appeared to be both cowed and enraged by the lady's spirited words, and Shubrick, hesitating as to what course to pursue, heard him say:

"I meant no offense, but feeling is so strong here against everything English, that loving you as I—"

"Stop, sir!" commanded the lady. "I have requested you to leave me, and as a gentleman, you should do so!"

"Oh, hang it, I'm going to say my say, and it won't take long, either, so, my lady, you must listen!"

Evidently the words were emphasized by action, for an instant after the lady cried:

"Release me, you coward! Release—"

Jack could stand no more, and one spring brought him before the speaker, and her companion, interrupting the former and causing the latter to fall back a few paces—releasing his grasp on the lady as he did so.

The moon came forth about this time, and Shubrick's identity, as an American Naval officer, was revealed to the startled couple, for he had hurried away from Boston in almost full uniform.

Forgetful of this, he explained:

"Madame, I am an American officer, and have accidentally overheard you. If I can be of any assistance, pray command me."

The lady, (who, as Jack quickly discovered, was both young and beautiful,) had recovered herself, by the time he finished, and smilingly replied:

"You can—if conveying a lady to Mr. Ludlow's residence, in Pine street, is not too much trouble."

Shubrick stared hard at "conveying," but quickly recovering, bowed and offered his arm, saying:

"At best, I am awkward in attending ladies, and the honor you confer on me, will, I fear, make me doubly so. Therefore, kindly—mercifully—overlook—"

"Everything, except that you are to convey me to Mr. Ludlow's," laughingly interrupted the lady, and taking Shubrick's arm, added:

"We will go at once, if you please."

They were starting off, when the lady's late companion, upon whom Shubrick—on seeing the lady's self-possession—had not bestowed a second glance, stopped them with:

"Hold a minute, sir! I brought the lady out, and must insist on my right to escort her home."

Shubrick looked inquiringly at his companion—not knowing what relation she might bear to the speaker, and not caring to reveal how much he had heard.

"We will proceed," calmly decided the lady. "I do not wish, nor would I allow that man to escort me anywhere, at any time."

"You hear," said Shubrick, significantly, and turned toward his companion.

"Yes, you cursed, intermeddling, cad, I hear!" angrily exclaimed the other. "And, I'll make you feel when we meet again!"

Half-turning back, and looking attentively at

the infuriated Englishman, in order to remember him, Jack carelessly remarked:

"I lodge at present at the 'Golden Eagle,' and shall be on, or around, the Bowling Green, both morning and evening to-morrow. I shall be delighted to meet you at any time, or place."

"But must not!" said the lady, as leaving the discomfited Englishman, she and Shubrick resumed their journey to Pine street, then a fashionable place of residence, and only a quarter mile away.

"Well, I certainly shall not look for the gentleman, neither shall I go out of my way to avoid him," quietly returned Shubrick, "that is, unless you especially desire it?"

"I do! You will please not put yourself in the way of meeting him," quickly answered the lady, adding:

"He is a Mr. Carden—first lieutenant of the vessel captured by the Constitution, and on parole—"

"Pardon me!" interrupted Shubrick. "He may have been an officer of the Guerriere, but he was not first lieutenant."

"Well, at all events, he has been living with the Ludlows for a couple of days, and—I am sorry to say—principally because I am residing there; but he knew my poor brother—who was a midshipman in the English Navy—and for that reason I tolerated him. Poor Harry!"

"Harry and I were not brother and sister," she continued, "but supposed we were, and bore the same name until he was drowned. I am Laura Lee!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GIRL THAT JACK MET.

FOR a few minutes Shubrick was too astonished to speak, and walked on in silence, considering what he should say, and the words of his companion: "Until he was drowned!"

"And now you must tell me who you are," said Miss Lee, after a short silence. "I already know you are a naval officer."

"My name is Shubrick," replied Jack, wondering what was to come next, and adding, through sheer desperation:

"I was—I am a lieutenant of the Constitution."

"Indeed! Do you know—ah—do you know—Mr. Decatur, or Mr. Lawrence, or—ah—Mr.—Mr. Spence?"

"I know Captain Lawrence, and have served under Commodore Decatur," promptly answered Shubrick, partly understanding the hesitating question.

"And—Mr. Spence?" faintly persisted the lady.

"Oh, George! Yes, I certainly know the 'Gentleman.' He's not a captain yet, but would be, if there were ships enough. He served as a volunteer on the Constitution when the Guerriere was captured."

"You know him, Miss Lee?"

"Ye-es, my brother knew him."

"Then, Miss Lee," said Jack, taking the bull by the horns, "you must be the lady for whom George is searching. He has gone South—is going to give up the service until he finds you."

"Finds me!" gasped Miss Lee. "What do you mean? Why—why—should he be searching for me?"

"That's a hard question to answer, and, perhaps, I should allow George to do it, but I think I may safely say that one reason—though, probably, not the prime one—is to prove that he did not run away with you, after you were married."

"Run away with me, after I was married!" repeated Laura, in an amazed tone, and then—very indignantly:

"Why, I never was married! Nobody ever ran away with me!"

"So I thought, when it was told me," observed Jack, adding:

"But that doesn't help poor George—or rather it did not, for he was accused of eloping with you, after you had been married."

He could feel Laura trembling, but kept his eyes fixed straight ahead, and after a few moments came the question:

"Who—accused—him?"

"Your uncle, Mr. Lee—for one," replied Shubrick, and on the spur of the moment, asked:

"Who informed you that Harry—your brother—was drowned?"

"My—Mr. Lee," replied Laura, and the hesitation was so apparent that Jack continued:

"Pardon me, Miss Lee, but where did he obtain his information? Did you see any official report of it?"

"N-o-o. I was told of it—that was enough—"

wasn't it? That Mr. Carden was a lieutenant, or something, in the same ship with poor Harry, and brought the news of his drowning."

They were now at Miss Lee's destination, and though the subject was an interesting one, and the lady felt her companion could make it more so—and he knew he could—it was too late to invite him to enter, but Jack received a cordial, even pressing request to do so next morning, which he promised to do, and, to prepare her for what he had to say, warned:

"It's unwise to believe any reports of people being drowned at sea, or killed in battle, Miss Lee—even when official, and I would not think of doing so when they are not—when the report comes from a private source."

There was a certain unintentional something in his tone, which caused Laura to ask:

"Why, what do you mean? Surely, Mr. Carden could not have been wrong—mistaken?"

"It is possible—quite possible, as are other things you may have been told," quietly replied Shubrick, and noting that the lady was greatly agitated, continued:

"But I will call (as you have kindly invited me), to-morrow, and we may be able to dig out some comforting facts."

"Very well, I shall be anxiously expecting you," was the truthful rejoinder, "but, before you go, was—was there not something queer—out of the way, you know—about Mr. Spence's marriage?"

Throwing prudence to the wind, Jack promptly and bluntly replied:

"George is not married, Miss Lee."

"Oh!" gasped the lady, and Shubrick had to pay for his carelessness, by supporting her with one hand, while the other vigorously applied the knocker.

"Miss Lee has fainted!" explained Jack to the half-dozen people who came hurrying to the door in response to his smashing application of the knocker, and one of them (a most charming young lady, the lieutenant thought), said:

"Won't you kindly bring her into the parlor?"

Of course, Jack would—and did—and then, ignoring all the others, who were the seniors of the young lady he addressed, said:

"Please tell Miss Lee, when she recovers, that I will call, as promised, early to-morrow—my name is Shubrick."

"Lieutenant of the Constitution?" queried the charming young lady, smilingly.

"The same," replied Shubrick, blushing, and making the admission in much the same tone and manner he might be expected to assume if caught red-handed picking pockets.

The listeners smiled—that is, all except the charming young lady (*vide* Shubrick), who, in a business-like way, nodded her pretty head, and having directed the female portion of the smiling though admiring group to attend Miss Lee, continued:

"My father, Mr. Ludlow, Mr. Shubrick, and my uncle, Mr. Edmund Ludlow, Mr. Shubrick."

Then calling a motherly-looking old lady (of whom she was a living though younger picture), she introduced her mother; after which, this charming young lady explained:

"And I am Bessie Ludlow, who will expect you to give us a full account of the chase of the Constitution and capture of the Guerriere, to-morrow, Mr. Shubrick. We have already had a second-hand account of the first, and a one-sided explanation of the other."

Then Shubrick, having repeated his promise to call on the morrow, went away full of Bessie Ludlow and Laura Lee—and the strange words of the latter.

So deeply engaged in thought was Jack that he failed to notice that his footsteps were dogged from the moment he left the Ludlow residence, by a man who had been watching and listening to what had been going on within.

The lieutenant's lodgings were in an inn just off what is now called Printing House Square, and being in no hurry, he walked up Broadway.

On reaching the latter thoroughfare, the eavesdropper was joined—or, rather, another man dropped into his tracks, and atulton street both sprung toward Jack—the first striking at him with a heavy cudgel, and knocking him down.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RESCUER—EXPLANATION—MYSTIFICATION.

WHEN the first man struck at Shubrick, the second man struck at him—the striker—and (be-

ing, probably, more accustomed to the use of the stick) struck just a trifle quicker, with the result that the blow which should have crushed in Jack's skull—and was intended to—merely caused him to stumble forward on his face.

Scarcely a half-minute elapsed between the time of Shubrick's fall and his recovery of his footing, but, short as the time was, it sufficed to inform him to whom he was indebted for his preservation.

"Ha, ha! Ye murderin', sn'akin' coward!" came the melodious (?) voice of Corny Sullivan, and with every epithet crack! came his shillalah. "How dar' ye shreck the masther, ye hound, ye?"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Shubrick. "You'll kill the man, Corny!"

"An' what harrum? Shure he was thryin' t' kill you!" remonstrated Corny, pausing in his work of belaboring "the masther's" assailant, whom he had stricken down with a spiteful energy not to be expected in one of his age and diminutive stature.

"Very true, Corny; but two wrongs don't make a right. Let him up."

"Faith, whin he goes at ye ag'in, ye may look out for yerself!" grumbled Corny.

"All right—let's have a look at him!"

Corny fell back, giving the prostrate man a parting kick to emphasize the order:

"Get up! Bad luck t' ye, get up!"

The order was obeyed with unexpected alacrity, and before Jack could get a glimpse of his assailant's countenance the latter jumped up and darted away.

"Now, now! see how smart ye are!" exulted Corny. "Nexht time ye scotch a snake—kill it!"

The ferocity of the little man's tone startled Shubrick even more than the sudden departure of the prisoner, and he remarked:

"You talk very fiercely, Corny."

"An' why wouldn't I? Isn't he an Englishman, an' be the same token a friend o' Misther Lee's—may the devil fly away w'u'd both o' them!"

"Friend of Lee's, eh? D'ye happen to know his name?"

"Well, I dunno; but I might as well tell ye all I know, as tell ye that, an' I'm thinkin' I'll do that same t'-morra' mornin', if the Lord spares me."

Shubrick was quite willing to wait, since morning would bring him the whole story—especially as his mind was fully occupied with beautiful Laura Lee and charming Bessie Ludlow, as he designated them.

"Very well, Corny, we'll adjourn the case," he assented, adding:

"But I may as well tell you, now, that I know where Laura Lee is."

"Eh? Ye know where she is? How— But sure it's mistaken ye are!"

"Why?" asked Shubrick, surprised at the little man's excited though positive assertion.

"Bekase ye musht be! Shure, ye didn't know where she was when ye axed me—now, did ye?"

"No, I did not," admitted Shubrick. "But why must I be mistaken?"

"Well, well, bekase I'll tell ye to-morra'," was the stubborn reply.

"Suit yourself, but I know I've found her," asserted Jack.

Corny shook his head obstinately, and in silence they proceeded to the Golden Eagle—each apparently having plenty to think of.

Jack was a mystery to his henchman, and, moreover, having a shrewd suspicion of the fact, refrained from asking questions, although really desirous of knowing how Corny came to be on hand so opportunely.

This apparent indifference irritated the little man so much that, as Jack was about to retire, he spitefully exclaimed:

"If ye know so well where Laura Lee is, let me tell ye ye'r a meracle!"

"For," he explained, "whin I left him in Charleston, he didn't rightly know where he was goin' t' put her, himself—an' I'm on'y three days in New York, an' kem be th' on'y vessel that dar' vintyir out for a week."

"We run th' blockade—an' he's not the man t' resk that."

Then, having given his new master something to think about, the little man went to his room.

"By Jove, that is odd!" soliloquized the lieutenant, who knew that Corny's statement regarding the blockade-running was more than likely true.

"How the dickens could she have reached here so quickly after him? It would have been impossible overland—and yet she spoke of this Car-

den's having been there two days! Confound Corny! He's spoiled my night's rest!"

This assertion to the contrary, notwithstanding, Lieutenant Shubrick was in the land of dreams ten minutes after he was abed. A long and tiresome journey, and an easy conscience, can give drugs odds and a beating any time.

Next morning Jack arose late—about nine—and having dressed perhaps a little more carefully than usual—for, without the least propensity to dress in the vulgar sense, he possessed a gentleman-like attention to personal neatness—he sought Corny.

"He went out early, sir—at five o'clock," explained mine host, adding with an injured air:

"And he said, sir, that our feather-beds hurt his tender bones!"

Shubrick could not forbear laughing at this exhibition of Corny's disposition to fault-finding, and having ordered his breakfast, sat down to peruse the papers of the day, to await the return of his "man," and the recital of the latter's story, before calling at the Ludlow residence.

Breakfast having come and been disposed of, in due course (remembering his promise), Jack refrained from walking toward the Bowling Green—as he had been inclined to do, and resumed his reading.

When eleven o'clock struck—Corny having failed to put in an appearance—Jack had accidentally discovered among the file of papers, a copy of the *Charleston News and Courier*, and then remembering that he would be anxiously expected by, at least, one person (Laura Lee, of course), removed this paper from the file, and started for Pine street.

On arriving at the Ludlow residence, Shubrick was received by the charming young lady of the previous evening, who, in response to his inquiry for Miss Lee, explained:

"Laura left us this morning. About seven o'clock a gentleman arrived from Mr. Lee—her father—and she left at once. It seems her presence is necessary to establish some of Mr. Lee's claims to land in the South."

"It's the same Lee all around! I knew the fellow was a scoundrel!" exclaimed Jack, forgetting in his excitement that charming young ladies have ears, and no matter how small, that those ears are capable of hearing.

"What did you say, Mr. Shubrick?" innocently (?) inquired the charming young lady, looking straight at Jack.

"Mr. Sullivan—to see Mr. Shubrick," announced a servant at that moment.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SHUBRICK BEGINS TO SEE LIGHT.

RIGHT on the heels of the announcement came the man himself. Before Shubrick had recovered from his surprise, Corny stood before him—having conquered the servant—and gaspingly explained:

"He's been here, and is gone ag'in."

"Who? And what do you mean by intruding here?" angrily demanded Jack.

"Arrah, have some sinse!" retorted Corny. "D'ye think it's for fun I kem here? It's lucky for ye, I didn't shleep all day! I saw ould Lee this mornin', at six o'clock, talkin' t' th' man that tried t' kill ye lasht night—Misther Carden!"

Shubrick stared—he was astonished, and showed it—and pleased at at length succeeding in arousing, at least, an exhibition of interest, Corny proceeded:

"I was up airy—for no man could sleep in that horrible din ye live in (!), an' goin' 'round met a gentleman, who's a sailor on a fishin'-vessel, an' he tould me that Lee—bad luck t' him! was afther comin' ashore frum another boat, so I watched for him."

Corny noticed that the lady also appeared to be interested, and paused to render his tale all the more impressive, but received only a sharp command from Shubrick:

"Quick, sir! Proceed with your story!"

"Purceed, is it?" scornfully repeated Corny. "Faith, it's little purceedin' you wor doin' at six this mornin'. Well, t' come back t' me sthory, I didn't know where he'd gone to, but he was bound t' come back, so I waited, an' finally, about an hour ago, down he comes with a lady, an' may th' devil admire me, if he didn't tell the captain she was his daughter, Laura!"

Evidently Corny expected that this announcement would create great surprise, and was surprised himself when Shubrick observed:

"That was correct—the lady was, and is Laura Lee, and, since you have begun, you may as well finish your story—if there is any more to it."

"Anny more to it! Faith, it's crazy ye are! The girrul he brought t' the vessel is no more

th' girrul I saw in Charleston thin I am. The wan in the South is younger, an', t' my mind, not as purty; so, Misther Leftinant, ye'r wrong about Laura Lee!"

"Anything more?"

This quiet inquiry infuriated the little man. Apparently, his precious, closely-guarded story was regarded as worthless by this indifferent master of his.

"Annythin' more!" he exclaimed. "Ay, is ther—a gr'ate d'ale more! That ould thafe is no more father o' that girrul thin I am—t' begin wud! Thin he's lied the young fellow, Harry, inta bel'avin' he's nobody at all an' no relation t' his own sisther! Sure anny fool could see the wor' brother an' sisther, but th' young lad, Harry, bel'aved him, and' like a fool wint away."

It was now Jack's turn to be astonished—and the charming young lady's as well—and Corny exultantly continued:

"Th' ould lad's thryin', now, t' get houl't o' some property in th' South—property that belongs t' th' young people widout a doubt."

And now Shubrick remembered his Mr. Lee.

"By Jupiter!" he exclaimed. "They are the same people! Corny is right!"

"Oh! So ye think I am, eh?"

"Yes; but not as you think. The lady you saw is really Laura Lee—or, rather, Oxnard, for I'm satisfied that, as you say, Laura is Harry's sister."

"But it's not th' wan I saw this mornin', I m'ane," explained the little man.

Shubrick was now beginning to see light, and the law-suit that sent him to sea gave a great deal of the mental illumination.

"This old scoundrel must have been palming off a false heir," he decided, speaking more to himself than the others.

And then, to Corny:

"Who is this fisherman-sailor friend of yours? Can you reach him quick, and can we hire his boat, think you?"

"Well, if I say so, I guess ye can," was the complacent reply.

"Then go at once, find him, and make a bargain for the boat. We must sail as soon as it is possible to get in stores."

"I must ask your pardon, Miss Ludlow," continued Shubrick, as Corny hurried off, "but this is most important, both to your friend, Miss Lee, and my friends, Harry Lee and George Spence, and I must therefore defer my story of the Constitution's late victories."

"I am more than willing," smilingly and admiringly returned Miss Ludlow, "and can only hope that every one will be as fortunate in finding a friend as Laura has been."

Shubrick blushed like the metaphorical school-girl, and his charming young lady continued:

"I will not detain you now, but does it not seem strange—especially in view of what that little man says—that Mr. Lee should require the assistance of his own daughter to prove his claim to this property?"

"Very strange indeed," assented Jack, adding:

"The case happened to be in my uncle's office, and I know something about it."

"Do you know Mr. Lee?"

"No, we have never seen him," replied Miss Ludlow, and explained:

"He was ill, and unable to accompany Laura, when she came to us (some five or six years ago) from Europe, and we—that is, Laura and I—often talk about how strange her father acts—never visiting and seldom writing, and then only for information."

"You have known Miss Lee a long time?" questioned Jack.

"Oh, yes—since childhood. Mr. Oxnard, whom we supposed was Laura's father—and, indeed, my mother holds to that still—was a great friend of my father's, and almost immediately after Mr. Lee, to enforce his authority, informed her that he was her father, she came to us."

"There must have been some terrible treachery—deceit—somewhere," continued the charming Bessie, "for Laura told me (after you had gone last night) that Mr. Spence was not married at all."

"That is true," confirmed Jack, "but George—that is, Mr. Spence—was informed that she had been married."

"Which, of course, was not the truth," returned Miss Ludlow, "and the fact that it was Mr. Lee who told her so makes me doubt if he really is her father."

"It is a very delicate subject, however, and as Laura appears to avoid it, I have had no

opportunity—no wish, indeed, to create suspicion by talking of my doubts.”

“Well, I must say that I agree with you,” said Jack, “for I’ve good reason, now, for doubting the whole story, and between George, Harry and myself, I hope we will be able to prove that my doubts are not groundless.”

“I trust Heaven will raise as good a friend as you are to Laura—”

“Mr. Sullivan to see Mr. Shubrick!” interrupted a servant.

CHAPTER XIX.

RACING TO CHARLESTON.

THE servant who interrupted Miss Ludlow did so only after repeated—but unheeded—intimations of her presence, and the “charming young lady” suddenly appeared to realize this fact.

“Show him in, Jane,” she said, “and excuse me for not attending to you before.”

“Jane,” however (being a woman), was not to be deceived, and went back to Corny, with ideas which would have astonished her mistress, but which proved, some time later, to be well founded.

“I’ve got the boat, an’ she’s all ready t’ go—so if ye’r goin’ at all, come on!” exclaimed Corny, bursting into the drawing-room as soon as he had received Jane’s permission.

There had been a half-minute of embarrassed silence, prior to the little man’s entrance, and Miss Ludlow was glad of the opportunity to say:

“I am very, very sorry to have delayed you, Mr. Shubrick, and hope you will soon return to tell us the story of the Constitution.”

“You cannot hope so more sincerely than I do!” returned Jack, who was even more badly hit than his words, or the expression of his countenance indicated—and either was warm enough to betray him.

Being quick-witted, as women are in such cases, the charming Bessie, who was getting into quite the same state of mind as Jack, blushed rosily as she bade him good-by, and wished him good luck.

“Now for your boat, Corny!” exclaimed Shubrick, as they hurried toward the waterfront.

“It’s little ye’r thinkin’ about boats,” muttered the little man.

“Come an this way,” he continued, in a louder tone, and just below where Wall street ferry now is, pointed to a sloop, saying:

“There she is, and here’s the man that owns her.”

The last words referred to a short, thick-set, “farry” looking individual, who had been awaiting their appearance in a small boat, and who, motioning them to enter it, explained:

“Want t’ get out with this tide.”

Shubrick looked inquiringly at Corny, having expected some trouble in negotiating for the vessel, but without giving any further explanation, the little man said:

“Arrah, can’t ye do as ye’r tould? Get in, an’ be off wid ye!”

Smilingly Jack obeyed, but on reaching the deck of the sloop, sought the captain, and attempted to make a bargain for the use of the boat.

“Oh, no, sir!” exclaimed the master. “You don’t know me, but I know you—and your mother—we belong to the same town—and I hope you won’t talk about money.”

That ended the lieutenant’s attempt at “business,” and with a simple “thank you, sir,” he watched the preparations for departure, which were so rapid and seamanlike as to excite his admiration, and, when they were under way, he expressed it.

“You’ve a fine craft and a thorough lot of seamen,” he said to the captain.

“Well, yes, there’s not a great many can show the’r heels to Polly,” admitted the captain, a little proudly, adding:

“She weathered the gale that drove us up here, like as if she were one o’ these here stormy petrels, and as for the men—they are good! They know Polly, and she knows them—from keel t’ truck.”

That was Captain Rhett’s opinion of his vessel and crew, leaving Shubrick to see for himself how fast she was.

“What do you think of our prospects of overhauling them—or reaching there with them?” asked Shubrick.

“We’ll do one, or t’other, sure!” returned the captain. “But, as they’ve got on’y two hours the best of us, I reckon we’ll overhaul ’em.”

Captain Rhett had a good glass, and this was placed at Jack’s disposal, but neither he, nor the

captain, could discover the vessel they were seeking—pursuing.

“She’s of the English cutter style—no ballast, but a ton, or so, of metal bolted to the keel,” described the captain, adding:

“It’s a new fangled sort o’ craft, but she’s light-keeled, though I’d bet my money on Polly.”

“The wind’s light, very light,” he added, “but I’m thinkin’ we’ll have plenty of it by-and-by.”

There was a light breeze from the south, that just ruffled the surface of the sea, and the clear blue of the cloud-flecked sky was a fitting background to the perfect summer day—the occasional pattering of the reef points against the sail, and the easy, lazy motion of the schooner, showing how light was the breeze, and, (to a landsman) giving no indication of the trouble to come.

“Well, so that it drives us toward Charleston, I am willing to stand a quick and strong dose of it,” rejoined Shubrick, adding as he turned to go below:

“I’ll get myself in shape to bear a hand in case of necessity.”

Descending to the cabin, the lieutenant proceeded to get himself in shape—as he expressed it. This, with most men, would mean the discarding of everything but the roughest of clothing, for a summer squall, skirting as they were along the coast, was, as Shubrick well knew, apt to make plenty of lively, and dangerous work for all hands.

But Shubrick, instead of borrowing a pea-jacket and a sou’wester, removed the civilian’s clothes in which he had called on Miss Ludlow, and reappeared on the deck of the Polly in full uniform, thereby creating no little sensation among the crew, who were unaware of the character of the passenger.

“Faith, now, there’s a man fur ye!” commented Corny, enjoying the admiring astonishment of all hands—including himself—on beholding the magnificent appearance of Shubrick, for if fine feathers don’t make fine birds, they do help a great deal in that direction.

Corny’s exultation was cut short by a call from his master—as he chose to term him.

While changing his clothing, Shubrick found the paper he had taken from the file in the reading-room of the Eagle, and on completing his toilet, glanced hastily at the local news.

Almost the first paragraph that struck his eye, was the following:

“Mr. Lee, who is visiting Colonel Drayton, has gone to New York on business. Miss Laura Lee, his beautiful daughter, will be the guest of Mrs. Shubrick until he returns.”

“Miss Laura Lee! Guest of Mrs. Shubrick!” muttered Jack in astonishment.

“By Jove! The old villain is the same whose case caused me to throw up the law. He’s been gulling everybody—but, I must see Corny!”

Hurrying on deck, Shubrick called Corny, and asked:

“How old is this Miss Lee you left in Charleston?”

“About eighteen or nineteen,” replied Corny, looking very curious.

“Hal! Now we’ve got the old robber!” excitedly cried Shubrick.

“Ketch a weasel asleep,” muttered Corny.

A low rumble of distant thunder caused the little man to gaze apprehensively at both wave and sky, but, heedless of the now threatening aspect of the latter, Shubrick continued:

“He’s a robber, Corny—a robber of orphans! Neither Harry nor Laura Lee is dead, and this girl in Charleston is an impostor! She is not his daughter any more than she is Laura Lee!”

“Faith, nobody said she was his daughter!” retorted Corny, adding, very emphatically:

“But, be me sowl, ye’r wrong about the rest!”

Captain Rhett had got the schooner in readiness for the impending blow, which now burst with the usual accompaniment of thunder, lightning and rain, driving Corny below, and ending further conversation regarding the Lees.

Short as it was violent, the squall quickly passed away, but the wind remained quite strong and Captain Rhett did not deem it prudent to spread much canvas, until suddenly a sail was sighted about two miles dead ahead.

“It’s the English cutter!” exclaimed the captain.

The wind was now increasing, and he was about to shorten the already reduced canvas on the Polly, when Shubrick stopped him.

“Hold!” he cried. “Give me command until we reach Charleston, and I’ll pay all damages.”

The captain stared, but knowing the speaker to be a thorough seaman, nodded assent.

The topsails were furled, and the fore and main sails reefed, but the moment the captain gave his consent to Shubrick’s taking command, the latter ordered:

“Very well! Set those topsails, and shake out that reef in your mainsail!”

“But we’ll overhaul her, sure, before—”

“That will not do! We must beat her to Charleston! Get up all your spare sails and spars!”

As if the order had been heard, the cutter began to spread more canvas, and the race to Charleston began.

CHAPTER XX.

CORNIE DECIDES TO TALK.

WHEN Shubrick gave the order to spread more canvas on the schooner, the captain looked at him in a way that plainly showed his opinion to be: “The man is mad!” and he expostulated:

“She won’t stand it, sir! We’ll lose the spars.”

“You have spare spars?” calmly asked Shubrick.

“Yes, sir, but—”

“Then set your topsails!” was the quiet but firm command, and Captain Rhett issued the necessary orders.

The crew, who had caught an idea of what was going on, and understood that the naval officer was now in command, exchanged looks of doubting admiration as they hastened to obey the captain’s, (now acting as first mate) orders.

There was certainly enough, in the desperate manner in which Shubrick pressed the canvas on the vessel to excite distrust, but there was something in his steady eye, and calm mien, that caused even the captain to refrain from further remonstrance, and all stood watching the effect of the sail as spread.

“The topmasts are bending like whipstocks,” observed Captain Rhett.

“Let them go! We must, and shall, pass that cutter! We have spare spars enough.”

“See! She is spreading more canvas!” continued Shubrick, but the others—and all hands were within hearing—could not see, for he possessed the only glass on board, and it was now growing dark.

Notwithstanding the captain’s warning, and the heavy seas that met her in such quick succession as greatly to retard her progress, the gallant Polly soon toiled her way through a league of the troubled element—dividing a mass of water at every plunge she took, that appeared to be growing more and more violent—but, still without harm, although the struggling hull was more than once buried as if never to arise.

The impunity with which the schooner bore such a press of canvas, under the circumstances, excited the admiration of all, and Captain Rhett, (as the Polly drew abreast of the cutter,) exclaimed:

“By George! I thought I knew what the Polly could do, but you’ve shown me that I didn’t.”

“She’s never been driven at such a rate—in such a mad manner—and he hasn’t parted a yarn,” the first mate, (among the men, in the waist of the Polly,) was saying at the same moment.

Seeing that he had overhauled, and could out-sail the cutter, it occurred to Shubrick that it would be wise to remain in company with that vessel—since she was carrying Laura Lee—until the gale abated, and as Captain Rhett finished, he ordered:

“Reduce your canvas just enough to keep within easy reach of that cutter—she’s carrying a little too much sail, and we must be ready to assist them in case of trouble.”

Captain Rhett smiled on hearing this criticism of the comparatively careful manner in which the cutter was being handled, but, making no comment, ordered the Polly placed under reefed mainsail and storm staysail, which (as he rightly judged) would keep her just astern of the chase—for the wind was still growing stronger, and the cutter was soon compelled to reduce her canvas.

About daybreak the gale began to abate, and, seeing everything going smoothly aboard the cutter, Shubrick said:

“Mr. Rhett, I will resign the command of the Polly to you—but don’t spare spars or canvas to show our heels to that craft. Set everything she will carry, and keep setting it, until we enter Charleston Harbor!”

“Money will buy spars and canvas, but it won’t buy happiness—and that’s what our getting to Charleston ahead of that cutter means to more than one.”

“Ay, ay, sir!” promptly returned the captain. “I know—thanks to you—what she can stand,

and I sha'n't spare her. You may go below, sir, and rest assured that she'll be hull down before ye awake."

"Begorra, it's mad he's goin'!" exclaimed Corny, who had just come on deck. "Fursht it's overhaulin' thim he's afther, an' now it's racin' thim he is."

The little man's remarks were generally addressed to nobody, but in a tone sufficiently loud to be heard by everybody, and everybody smiled on hearing the foregoing.

Seeing the captain had entered into the spirit of the chase, Shubrick, joining in the general smile, said:

"All right, captain! The more you beat that cutter into Charleston, the greater shall be your—that is, the reward of the men."

Then turning to Corny, he continued:

"Come below in a few minutes. I want to talk to you."

Apparently, Corny was eager to be talked to, for Shubrick was barely in the cabin before the valet appeared, and demanded:

"Well, sor—what d'ye want t' talk about?"

"Sit down!" was the quiet order, and Corny having obeyed, his master continued:

"What do you know of this Miss Lee you left in Charleston—besides what you've told me?"

Corny hesitated, and Shubrick warned:

"The time has come when you must choose between going back to Lee—if he will receive you—and remaining with me. I don't believe you will deceive me, and I won't have any half-way confidences."

The tone in which this was uttered impressed Corny wonderfully—it was the first time Shubrick had spoken to him in that way, and scratching his head in a puzzled manner, he decided:

"Faith, thin, if that's how it is, I'll tell ye what little I know—an' it's me own t' tell, anyhow—for I'd rather be hung wud you, thin die a nathural death wud that old thief!"

CHAPTER XXI.

CORNYS STORY.

SHUBRICK smiled at Corny's vehement declaration of allegiance, and perceiving this, the latter rebuked:

"Faith, ye needn't laugh! If ye knew him as well as I do, ye wouldn't—an' remimber ye haven't thrapped him yit. He's as cute as an ould badger, an' if he got th' l'aste id'a that I could ye what I'm goin' t' tell ye, he'd have me life for it—bad luck t' him—though it's me own information, for th' gurrul tould herself, an' made no saycrit of it aither."

"It's not much," he continued, noting the expectant expression on Shubrick's face, "but, as I said before, he'd have me life for it—set his cut-throats an me, th' same as he done wud th' young lad."

To attempt to hurry Corny would be worse than useless, so when he paused at this point, Shubrick quietly arose from his chair, and lighting a cigar, threw himself upon a lounge, remarking:

"I always thought he was a thoroughpaced scoundrel."

"Begorra, ye'r' right he is! But it's a toss o' yer hat which is th' worst: him or th' laddy-buck that tried t' fix you—may big bad luck t' both o' thim."

"Well, t' make a long storv short, I had t' skip be th' light o' th' moon from Ireland, in '98, an' be great good luck got off between two days in a struggler bound for France, an' there I sthayed till two year ago, whin I happened t' sthop a runaway carriage."

"I wuz hurt a bit, an' whin I kem back t' me sinces, found meself in Mither Lee's hotel. He gev me a few pound, an' offered t' hire me—if I'd thravel wud him."

"As I didn't have enough t' bless meself wud, av coarse I jumped at th' offer, an' sthayed wud him intil we raiched Charleston. Thin he axed me t' jine wud three or four more, in crupplin' an' robbin' th' young lad—Harry—an' thin I tould him, plain an' fair, what I thought of him."

"Sure if I wazn't th' quietest an' best-timpered man in th' world," (I) says I, "I wu'd'a been gone long ago, but whin it comes t' murtherin' yer own nevy—I'm done wud ye, ye ould scoundrel!"

"Huh!" says he, "you're a fine one t' praich about murther—an' you a Fanyin (Fenian)—an' a Ribbonman—that ought t' be hung long ago."

"Thin I gev him a puck in th' mouth an' knocked him down, for, if I wuz a Ribbonman, I niver murthered any wan!"

"And the girl—this Laura?" gently hinted the lieutenant.

"I'm comin' t' that!" snapped Corny, and, after a few moments' thoughtful silence, resumed:

"This Laura—as ye call her—was wid th' ould b'aste whin I stopped th' runaway, an' she wuz r'ale kind t' me while me arm an' collar-bone wur mindin', an' before long we bekem great fri'n's."

"She wuz a delicate shlip of a gurrul, but purty as a picter, an' whin she'd be lonely like—an' faith, that wuz often enough—she'd come an' talk t' me, so I l'arned that she wuz th' heir-ess t' a big esthate in Ameriky, left be her uncle—I can't remimber his name, but it began wid an Ox, at any rate. Ox—Ox—"

"Oxnard?" suggested Shubrick.

"Be jabers, that's th' very name! How did ye guess it?"

"Go ahead—I'll tell you when your story is finished."

"Divil a word more I'll say, till ye tell me!" declared Corny, looking the very picture of obstinacy.

"Oh, confound you!" exclaimed Shubrick, with a half-angry laugh. "That's the real name of my Laura Lee."

Corny looked amazed on hearing this, and his master urged him to proceed with his story, saying:

"Go ahead! I've told you how I came to guess the name."

"Thin, be th' piper that played before Moses, th' ould fox is bagged! He's bringin' this gurrul in Charleston t' settle a big lawsuit, purtendin' that your Laura wuz dead—an' be th' same token he houlds her will, l'avin' th' whole property t' th' other—my Laura!"

It was now Shubrick's turn to look amazed. He knew a great deal about the origin and early history of the big "lawsuit," but nothing of what had taken place for the past six years, and Corny's statement made him all the more eager to reach Charleston (and as much ahead of the cutter as possible), in order to have time to inform Colonel Drayton of what he had learned.

"Wait here!" he ordered, and leaving Corny in the cabin, hurried on deck, where Captain Rhett greeted his appearance with:

"Oh, you are too soon, Mr. Shubrick! We are leaving her pretty fast, but it's too soon to—"

"No, no! I didn't come on deck for that," interrupted Shubrick, "but I've just learned something that makes me still more anxious to beat that cutter—and beat it well, too—into Charleston."

"Spare nothing, captain! Tell the men they will be well paid for every hour we beat her."

"It don't look as if we'd have much trouble, for they're in no great hurry," returned Captain Rhett, adding:

"But they 'peared to be kind o' interested in us, for after you went below, I noticed they were looking at me through glasses—curiosity, I s'pose."

"Very likely," assented Shubrick, taking the captain's glass, and turning it on the cutter, now about a mile astern of the schooner.

But his mind was on Corny's story, and after one careless glance, he descended to the cabin, again urging Captain Rhett to push the Polly.

"Anything more, Corny?" he asked, and, starting out of a brown study, the little man answered that there was not, but, by close questioning, Shubrick learned a good deal regarding Laura Lee (No. 2)—enough to make him almost certain that she was an innocent tool in the hands of Lee.

Pretty well satisfied that he had Mr. Lee in a rather tight corner, Shubrick retired to rest—having been on deck all night—and when he met Captain Rhett at dinner, the latter smilingly observed:

"You are welcome to go on deck now, sir—but you'll have good eyes if you can see that cutter."

"Glad to hear it!" returned Shubrick. "But don't forget that every hour we gain may be of the greatest importance. So keep pushing her, captain."

"Never fear, sir, on that score. There will be little rest for the Polly, or her crew, until you are landed in Charleston—the hands are as eager to earn the reward you promise them, as you are to get there."

And it was as Captain Rhett said—both himself and his men worked and watched unceasingly, and the schooner was kept under every possible rag of canvas, until she entered the harbor at Charleston.

It was in the early morning that the anchor was dropped—just at dawn—and the rattling of the cable aroused Shubrick, who came on deck almost immediately afterward.

"Hello! The Stranger, by Jove!" he exclaimed, as his gaze rested on the beautiful brig, lying a half-cable's length away.

"I want to go aboard that vessel as soon as possible," he continued, addressing Captain Rhett, and while the latter was getting out a boat, aroused Corny, to whom he intrusted a large sum to be divided among the crew.

CHAPTER XXII.

AWAITING THE CUTTER.

ON boarding the Stranger, Shubrick learned that the captain was ashore, and a few minutes later Lieutenant Alden appeared, and informed him that Harry had left the brig immediately after her arrival, and had not returned.

"We got in a week ago to-day," explained Alden, "and haven't seen or heard from him since, except once, and that was a letter ordering me to allow no one ashore, except for water and fresh stores, and to keep in readiness to sail at a moment's notice."

"That's rather strange—sounds as if he contemplated something not exactly lawful," thought Shubrick, and aloud:

"When did you receive that letter, Mr. Alden?"

"Four days ago."

"Did he give any address? I ask because I have important information for him."

"No, except a line at the bottom, saying he might be away several days, there was nothing but the orders I repeated to you."

"Well, let him know of my arrival, and anxiety to see him, the moment he comes aboard," said Shubrick, as, after a minute's hesitation, he decided not to confide what he had learned to Alden, and returning to the boat, was pulled ashore.

He had arranged with Captain Rhett that Corny should remain on board the Polly until the cutter arrived, and then watch the movements of its passengers.

Although it was very early, Shubrick immediately called at Colonel Drayton's residence, where, after arousing the household, he was informed that the colonel was not at home.

"Gone t' Columbia, sah, 'n' didn't say when he'd be back," said the sleepy-looking dorky who came to the door in response to Shubrick's summons.

"Well, it don't matter—I can ascertain at the office," thought the latter, as he started homeward.

He was mistaken, however, for on calling at the office about noon, the boy in charge informed him that there was no certainty about the time when the colonel would return.

"Maybe in a week—maybe two weeks," was the most definite time the office-boy could fix upon.

"What case is he engaged upon?" asked Shubrick, a little curiously.

"Don't know, sir, but it's some big one, for Mr. Matthews has gone with him, and I'm all alone."

[Mr. Matthews was Shubrick's successor as a law student, and after obtaining his diploma, became Colonel Drayton's assistant.]

Having left a message for his uncle, Shubrick returned home, feeling rather disappointed, and half inclined to go to Columbia, but refrained from doing so because he wished to be on the spot when Lee arrived.

He had found Laura Lee (No. 2) to be just as Corny had described her—a rather delicate-looking girl of eighteen or nineteen, and "pretty as a picture."

She knew nothing of Mr. Lee's whereabouts, except that he had gone to New York on business connected with her property, and a few adroit questions revealed to Shubrick that she had not the faintest idea of where that property was located.

"But Uncle Robert knows all about it," she had innocently explained to Shubrick, that morning. "He has my poor cousin's will, and all the other papers—that is, I suppose he has, for I've never seen them."

"It seems so strange that my cousin should have left anything to me," continued the girl, in a meditative tone. "I had never even heard of her until my uncle came to tell me of my good fortune, shortly after my mother's death."

"And your uncle—I suppose you were in the habit of seeing him frequently?"

"Oh, no! I never saw him until he came to tell me about the will. He is the executor, you know, so he had to find me."

"Do you know when and where your namesake died?" asked Shubrick, curious to know how far the deception had been carried.

Miss Lee blushed and looked embarrassed as, after a few moments' thought, she answered:

"I am ashamed to say I do not. Of course, uncle Robert told me at the time, but I was only a child of thirteen, and paid no attention to what he said, I suppose, for I cannot remember anything, except that she had died, and left all her property to me.

"But I will find out and visit her grave as soon as this lawsuit is settled," she added. "I have been thinking of that ever since your friend called."

"My friend?" and Jack looked inquiringly from the speaker to his mother.

"Oh, dear! How careless—forgetful I am becoming!" cried Mrs. Shubrick.

"Yes, John, there was a gentleman here a few days ago, who said he knew you—and Laura's cousin, too! His name is Smith, and he is captain of a vessel that's in the harbor now—What is the name of the vessel, Laura?"

"The Stranger."

"By Jove! So Harry found you, eh?"

Shubrick was looking at the girl, though addressing his mother.

"Harry?" repeated Mrs. Shubrick. "Was that his name, Laura?"

"Yes," blushing replied the girl, and with an effort to hide her confusion, asked:

"Was he looking—looking for me, Mr. Shubrick?"

"No—though I've no doubt he was better pleased than if he had found the man he was looking for," was the laughing reply, and turning to his mother, the speaker continued:

"How long was he here, and can you tell me where he is?"

"Oh, yes, I can tell you where he is—or has gone to. He was with us three days—until day before yesterday, when he found it was necessary to go to Columbia."

"It was the morning after Colonel Drayton went away," added Miss Lee.

"Yes," assented Mrs. Shubrick, "Uncle Drayton spent an hour here the previous evening, before going to Columbia."

Jack did not connect the two departures, and knowing how close-mouthed his uncle was about such matters, did not think it worth while to ask if it was known upon what business the colonel had gone to the capital, but it came out on the third day following his arrival.

Early in the morning of that day, calling on Captain Rhett, and finding that the cutter had not arrived, he asked:

"Captain, do you think that fellow ever will arrive here—or meant to?"

"He meant to—that we heard from one of his crew—but I don't think he will. He's put in somewhere along the coast, I believe."

"My idea exactly, but why should he do that?"

"Hard t'say, sir. Did any one on board know ye? They were watching us through glasses, ye know, when you came on deck the mornin' we passed 'em."

"Laura let him see that she recognized me—probably told him who I was!"

As this thought flashed through Shubrick's brain, he felt convinced that it accounted for the non-arrival of the cutter, and he said:

"You've struck the truth, captain—there's no doubt about it! One of the passengers knew me."

"You need not remain any longer on my account, for I'm satisfied that she will not put in here."

Then, bidding Corny follow with his portmanteau, Shubrick went home to think over the situation.

He was sorely disappointed, and angry with himself for leaving the cutter as he did, but by the time he had reached home, a plan to trace Lee had suggested itself.

"I'll take Corny, and ride back along the coast until I find out where they put in, and then, even if they've left the cutter, they will have left some trace of the direction they've gone in."

Meeting his mother as he entered, Shubrick informed her that he was going away for several days—just how long he could not say.

"Well, I must admit that you have not taken me by surprise," laughingly declared Mrs. Shubrick.

"Why? I've only just decided to go—how—"

"Oh, yes," interrupted Mrs. Shubrick, "but I knew you couldn't resist the temptation."

"What do you mean?" asked Jack, in astonishment.

"Why the end of the Lee case, of course, and I'm afraid you've decided too late. Mr. Lee, if nothing unforeseen occurs, will receive a large sum of money—an immense sum, I should say—and full possession of the property, (for Laura) the day after to-morrow."

"Of course, you know that already," continued

the mother, while the son listened like a man in a dream. "Mr. Lee is with Uncle Drayton by this time—he was to meet him in Columbia to-day."

For a few minutes after his mother ceased speaking, Shubrick remained buried in thought, and then he asked:

"How did the colonel go—on horseback?"

"Yes, he and Mr. Matthews took those wiry-looking ponies you saw a few months ago."

"Ah! there's some luck left me still! Light-foot is all right, mother?"

"Yes, but, gracious! you are not thinking of taking that horse, I hope? He wouldn't, for fear of hurting him."

"That's the only horse can do it. It's over a hundred rough miles, and he'll do it in two days if I have to kill him! Good-by, mother!"

And with a parting kiss, Jack was off before his mother could interpose further objections.

All of his uncle's servants knew him, and a half-hour after leaving his mother, he was dashing along the road to Columbia.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LURED TO THE TRAP.

It is the day of the argument which will finally settle the case of Lee vs. Lee, and Colonel Drayton feels certain of success—as well he may, since he has been successful all along, though the opposing parties have deferred his hour of triumph by appealing from one court to another, until now they have reached the highest authority.

The colonel and his assistant are at breakfast, and the subject of conversation is the case they are about to try.

"I wonder if they've tried to find any defect in the death-certificate of the first Laura Lee?" says the colonel, musingly.

"Doubting that, was their last resort, I guess," returns Matthews, adding:

"But didn't it strike you that Mr. Lee appeared to be a little alarmed when they threatened to send to France for proof of its falsity?"

"Well—yes," hesitatingly admitted the colonel, "but it was only natural where there's so much at stake. That is why he went to New York to procure additional proof."

Breakfast over, the two gentlemen were preparing to go to court, when Mr. Lee arrived, looking tired and travel-stained.

"Do you know if they are going to fight that death-certificate?" he asked, after the usual greetings were exchanged.

"No, we cannot ascertain that until we go to court," replied the colonel, adding:

"I presume you were successful in your mission to New York?"

"Oh, yes, I'm all ready for them," chuckled Lee, and he accompanied the lawyers to court.

The case was not to be tried that day, however, for scarcely had they entered, when the clerk informed Colonel Drayton that the chief justice had died the previous night, and that, out of respect, the court would be adjourned immediately after opening.

"There is no need of our remaining here, Mr. Lee," declared Colonel Drayton, on hearing this.

"Mr. Matthews can remain and meet the counsel on the other side when they arrive—they may have something to say to us."

"Very good; it will give me an opportunity to get some rest."

Lawyer and client had not gone a hundred yards from the court-house, when suddenly the former exclaimed:

"Oh, hang it! Walk on toward your lodgings, Mr. Lee—I will overtake you on the way."

"I am going back to warn Matthews regarding that proof," continued the colonel.

"All right; I'll walk slow."

As the lawyer turned away, he came face to face with a rough-looking, though fairly well-dressed man, who had been following close behind him and his client.

"A most villainous-looking fellow," was the colonel's comment, as he turned aside to allow the man to pass him.

Something impelled the colonel to turn and glance after the stranger, and to his astonishment he saw the latter walking beside Mr. Lee.

"Strange people—some of these friends of Lee's," muttered the lawyer, as he resumed his course toward the court-house.

"Hello! What the dickens did that fellow mean by that smile?" he continued, half a minute later, when a fine-looking young man, attired in semi-naval uniform, passed and glanced at him with a quizzical smile.

The "villainous-looking fellow" meantime was saying to Mr. Lee:

"The young chap, Harry, is here in town—right behind you—don't turn—and two of our men are behind him."

"Good heavens! How came he to be here? Where did he come from?"

"He came from Charleston, after spending two or three days with a Mrs. Shubrick, and looks as if he meant mischief—as if he knew something, and what that may mean you best know."

"With Mrs. Shubrick? Good God! He knows—or suspects—"

The old man stopped—he was saying too much, and his companion was looking and listening like one keenly interested.

"Well," asked the other as Lee ceased, "what are we to do with him?"

"Why didn't you prevent him from coming here at all?" querulously demanded the master—for they were, as it proved, master and man.

"Couldn't do it! How was I to know that he would run into Charleston? It was by the merest accident that I discovered he had been there, and left for here."

"Well, what shall I do?" helplessly asked Lee, adding:

"You must do what you think best, Judson. I don't want to—to ki—to— Well, you know what I mean, but he must not be at liberty to interfere with me for two or three days—yes, a week—under any circumstances."

"I understand—you—thoroughly," slowly returned Judson. "If he will quietly submit to be locked up for a week—well and good. If not, then he must be kept quiet, anyhow!"

"That's the idea, isn't it?"

"Ye-es."

"And a very pretty one it is—for you. But what about us? Murder is a serious matter, Mr. Lee."

"Hush! Who spoke of murder? You shall be well paid—five hundred dollars to each of the others, and a thousand to yourself."

Judson laughed—a low, sarcastic laugh—and Lee in a nervous, angry way, asked the cause of his mirth.

"Well, first, your pretending not to know that it must be death this time. The fellow's beaten us off—escaped at all events—fully a half-dozen times, as you well know, and is now constantly on his guard, and goes armed to the teeth."

"To talk of making a prisoner of such a man, is really amusing."

"Well—what else?"

"Just this. Even to kill this man, except we are favored by some accident, will require one or two more—to give courage to the two we already have. He has beaten us so often that they are cowed, and he can no longer be led into traps, no—"

Judson stopped short, as if something had occurred to him, and then, with a horrible oath, continued:

"Yes, he can! And now is the time, and you are the man to do it!"

"Do what? What d'ye mean—what d'ye mean, Judson?" nervously demanded Lee.

"Mean? You know perfectly well what I mean! There's no use beating around the bush in this affair, and unless you take a hand in the game right now, I'm going to drop it!"

"This is the best chance we'll ever have. He'll not suspect any trap while you're with us, and this road leads straight out of the city. He's following you now, and will keep on until he finds where you are located."

"But what am I to do?"

"Keep straight ahead until you get outside the city—then turn into the first side-path you meet—and then we'll finish the job!"

"I'll bid you good-by now, and meet you when you have him in the trap."

"But—but—I—"

"Either do as I say, or pay me, and I'll drop the thing, and you can take care of yourself."

"I—I—don't want to ki—that is, don't hurt him more than—" Lee stammered.

"Rot! Here! Give me your hand, as if we were saying good-by—then, do as I told you."

Shaking Lee's hand as he spoke, the murderous scoundrel turned down the cross street, at which they stopped for a moment, and then, after a little hesitation, the other—the principal—the bait—walked slowly toward the outskirts of the city, luring the unsuspecting victim to his death.

About a quarter mile outside the city, the arch-scoundrel came to the cross-roads.

The roads ran east and west, north and south, and for a few moments Lee stood hesitating as to which to take, until he noticed a narrow,

shaded path, branching off the road running north and south, and this he took—Harry following without any suspicion of danger, and intending to overtake his uncle, and give vent to some of the feeling with which his heart was bursting.

"Now, I'll go for him!" thought Harry, and he quickened his pace.

Ten yards further, three pistol-shots rung out, a cry of pain followed, and Harry plunged forward on his face.

At last the trap had proved successful.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TABLES TURNED.

JUDSON had spoken no more than the truth when he stated that the defeats sustained in their attempts to injure Harry, had cowed his confederates—and he might have added with equal truth, himself.

It was this feeling that caused them to fire upon the young commander when they saw him hurrying after their employer.

In their excitement, the assassins forgot their proximity to the cross-roads, and were not aware that all that vicinity was crossed and recrossed by roads and pathways—and this forgetfulness and ignorance saved the victim's life.

As Harry fell, a shriek came from a near-by and intersecting path, followed by an encouraging cry from the main road, behind where the assassins were hidden, and from which they were rushing forth to finish their work.

The cry caused the assassins to pause, and their employer to turn and look back, and as he did so a young lady rushed toward the prostrate Harry, crying:

"Oh, you cruel, wicked men! How could—"

Harry had half-turned as he fell, and Laura—for it was she—caught sight of his face at this point. For a moment, she stood motionless, and then with a piercing shriek fell beside the victim of Lee's avarice.

"Quick! Finish!" began the latter, hurrying back, but never completed the fiendish sentence.

He had just reached Laura when a man burst through the trees lining the path, and struck him down—split his skull in two.

Dropping the sword with which he had performed this deadly feat, the new-comer, pistol in hand, turned on the startled assassins like an enraged lion, and they fled—or rather sought to fly, but Laura's second shriek had attracted another rescuer—one whom the miscreants had met before, and who came rushing from the main road barring their flight along the path—Jack Shubrick!

"Give it to them, Jack!" cried the first rescuer, as Shubrick appeared.

"Ay, ay, George!" came the answering cry, followed instantly by a shot as the assassins attempted to escape among the trees.

Shubrick's shot brought down the fellow called Judson, another turned, and, holding up his hands, cried for mercy, the third escaped.

Turning over the prisoner to Shubrick, Spence—for, as the reader has doubtless surmised, he was "George"—hurried to Laura, and, seeing she was already recovering, turned his attention to Harry.

"Good heavens!" he cried, on seeing Harry's blood-stained face, and, pulling a metal flask from his pocket, forced some liquor between the clinched teeth of his unconscious friend.

Several persons whose attention had been attracted by the shots and cries now came on the scene, and, placing the prisoner in charge of one, Shubrick hurried another for water, another for a physician, and still another for a carriage, while he himself hastened to the assistance of his friends.

Laura had just recovered consciousness, and opened her eyes as Jack came up. She smiled faintly for an instant, and then, as her eyes rested upon George bending over Harry, looked as if she was about to faint again, but rallied sufficiently to blush slightly when Shubrick said:

"Here, George—you attend to Miss Lee. I'll look after the other patient."

Spence had ascertained that the blood on Harry's head was the result of a superficial wound, caused by an upward glancing bullet striking his forehead, and that the only other injury was a bullet in the shoulder; and he was quite happy to exchange patients.

Just what he said or did (aside from assisting her to arise) is immaterial, but when a doctor arrived shortly after, George's presence appeared to have wrought a wonderful change in Laura, and she seemed almost happy.

Harry, too, was able to get upon his feet

when the physician arrived, and to direct the latter to give his first attention to Judson—Lee having died almost instantly.

"This man will live a few hours," declared the doctor, and at Harry's request Judson was carried to an adjacent farm-house.

CHAPTER

EXPLANATIONS.

AS soon as Shubrick saw the little party started for the farm-house, he mounted the famous Lightfoot, whom he found standing where he had left him in the road—too tired to care about wandering—and rode into the city, where he quickly found Colonel Drayton, to whom he related what had happened.

The colonel was amazed—could hardly believe Jack's story, and when it was ended, asked:

"Where is she now—the girl whose will and death-certificate must have been forged?"

"At the farm-house where they carried this Judson. Finding he was about to die, the fellow expressed a desire to tell what he knew of this murderous business, and they—Laura, and Harry, and my friend Spence—are waiting to hear his story."

"Let us go there at once!" exclaimed the colonel, putting on his hat, and as they descended from his room, explained:

"His story may be of great importance, and should be put in legal form."

They were too late, however. Shubrick's story had taken up too much time, and when they arrived at the farm-house Judson was dead.

"All he could tell," explained Harry, "was that it was the man whom I had known as my uncle who had caused all these attacks upon me, and that it was Lee's intention to convert all the property he could dispose of into cash, and leave the country as soon as this suit was settled."

"But he would never have had a chance to do that," added Harry.

"Why?" asked Colonel Drayton, looking very curious.

"Because I would have testified that Laura and myself are Oxnards—not Lees, and as his last claimant to the property bases her title on a pretended will of Laura Lee's, he would have been defeated."

Colonel Drayton now looked, and was, even more amazed than before, and Harry explained how they had, at the request of their uncle some eight years previous, adopted his name.

"He must have gone mad in his greed for gold and hatred of this country," continued Harry, "for, about a year ago, when trouble between England and America seemed unavoidable, and I told him I should fight on this side, he astonished me by saying that I was not an American—having been born in England where I was adopted by the man who was supposed to be my father."

"I was foolish enough to believe that, as well as many other lies, and taking some money left me by my aunt—his sister—fitted out a vessel and came to this country."

"How did you discover the truth regarding your name?" asked the colonel.

"Accidentally. A few weeks ago I was roaming about in the neighborhood of the church which Laura and I had attended as children, and entered. Meeting the old sexton, I told him who I was as he had known me, and he remarked that there had been many changes since the day I was christened—saying he remembered it well because his own son was christened the same day."

"That put me on the track. I examined the records and found the names and dates of birth of both Laura and myself."

"Well, well—it's the strangest story I've heard," commented the colonel, adding:

"But what could have been his object in first attempting to palm off your sister as the heiress, and then change to the Laura Lee now in Charleston?"

"Perhaps she is the real heiress, and, having discovered that, he was afraid the other side would find her," shrewdly suggested Spence.

"By Jove! I believe you've hit it. He had gone so far with the other game that retreat would have been ruinous—if not impossible."

This proved to be the truth (or as near as they could get to it), when Colonel Drayton examined the dead man's private papers, and, on learning the recently-discovered facts in the case, the famous suit of Lee vs. Lee was discontinued by the other side.

On returning to Charleston, Laura Lee was

astounded to find that her namesake was living and that she herself was the real heiress.

"We will divide," she said to Laura Oxnard.

"Oh, no, that would never do!" was the laughing reply. "I find I am quite wealthy through a will my uncle made before he became insane."

"Was he crazy?" wonderingly asked Laura Lee.

"That is the only—the most charitable way to account for his actions."

"Then I suppose you won't divide?"—with a sigh.

"No—not your money, at all events, but your company, yes. You must come with us to New York—for a little, anyhow."

"Oh, I couldn't—it's so far, and—"

"But you must!" interrupted the elder girl, and blushing explained:

"Mr. Spence and I are very old—friends, and we are going to be married when we reach New York. I want you to be one of my bride's maids."

This was putting a new complexion on the proposition, and Laura, the younger, gladly agreed to it.

Having secured her namesake's consent, Laura Oxnard hastened away to find Spence, and inform him of that important fact, and scarcely had she left the Shubrick parlor, where the foregoing conversation took place, when Harry entered.

Harry had spent three days in Laura Lee's company when he arrived in Charleston, and had now been a week under the same roof with her.

Matters—love-matters—progress rapidly where people are constantly thrown together, and when Laura Oxnard returned with Spence, she was surprised at the change which had taken place in her namesake.

The latter blushed furiously when they entered, and looked shyly at Harry, who immediately responded:

"Laura—that is, Miss Lee, cannot be your bride'smaid, Laura, because she has agreed to be a bride herself, on that occasion—I am to be the groom."

Then there were more congratulations, and Harry's sister observed:

"There is no one left now but Mr. Shubrick—and Miss Ludlow."

This suggestive remark was quickly carried to Jack (and also to Miss Ludlow, when the party shortly afterward arrived in New York), but nothing came of it—to masculine eyes.

But when, just after the wedding of Laura Oxnard and George Spence, and Laura Lee and Harry Oxnard, an order came for Shubrick to join his ship immediately, neither of the brides were too much engaged to notice the sudden paleness that overspread the face of the charming Bessie.

"Who's got command of Old Ironsides now?" asked Spence.

"Bainbridge," slowly replied Jack, his eyes fixed on Miss Ludlow, and a few minutes later, when the latter left the room, followed her—"to pack up."

Miss Ludlow was absent quite some time, but when she returned her pallor had vanished—she looked radiantly happy, and the ladies, at all events, guessed the cause, and were confirmed in their conjecture by the sudden and suspicious change to tears when Jack, attended by Corny, appeared to say good-by.

"They don't experience any trouble in finding a ship for you, Jack," remarked Spence, as he shook Shubrick's hand.

"They can't afford to be without the Man of Destiny!"

"Well, I hope they never will," returned Shubrick; and his wish was granted.

During nine years the Man of Destiny was constantly on duty, except when he was married to—but we must defer that revelation, as well as the recital of the exciting events which followed close on the heels of Fighting Jack's arrival in Boston, whither he was attended by cross-grained but faithful Corny.

Spence, like all other young officers of that period, did not allow matrimony to interfere with duty, and soon after attained his coveted captaincy—a rank which he had long well deserved.

Harry Lee, or rather Oxnard, was compelled to remove to England during almost the entire period of the second war with England, but the damage done by his privateers, (which he fitted out in France, while looking after the interests of his sister and himself in Great Britain,) is a matter of history.

THE END.

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